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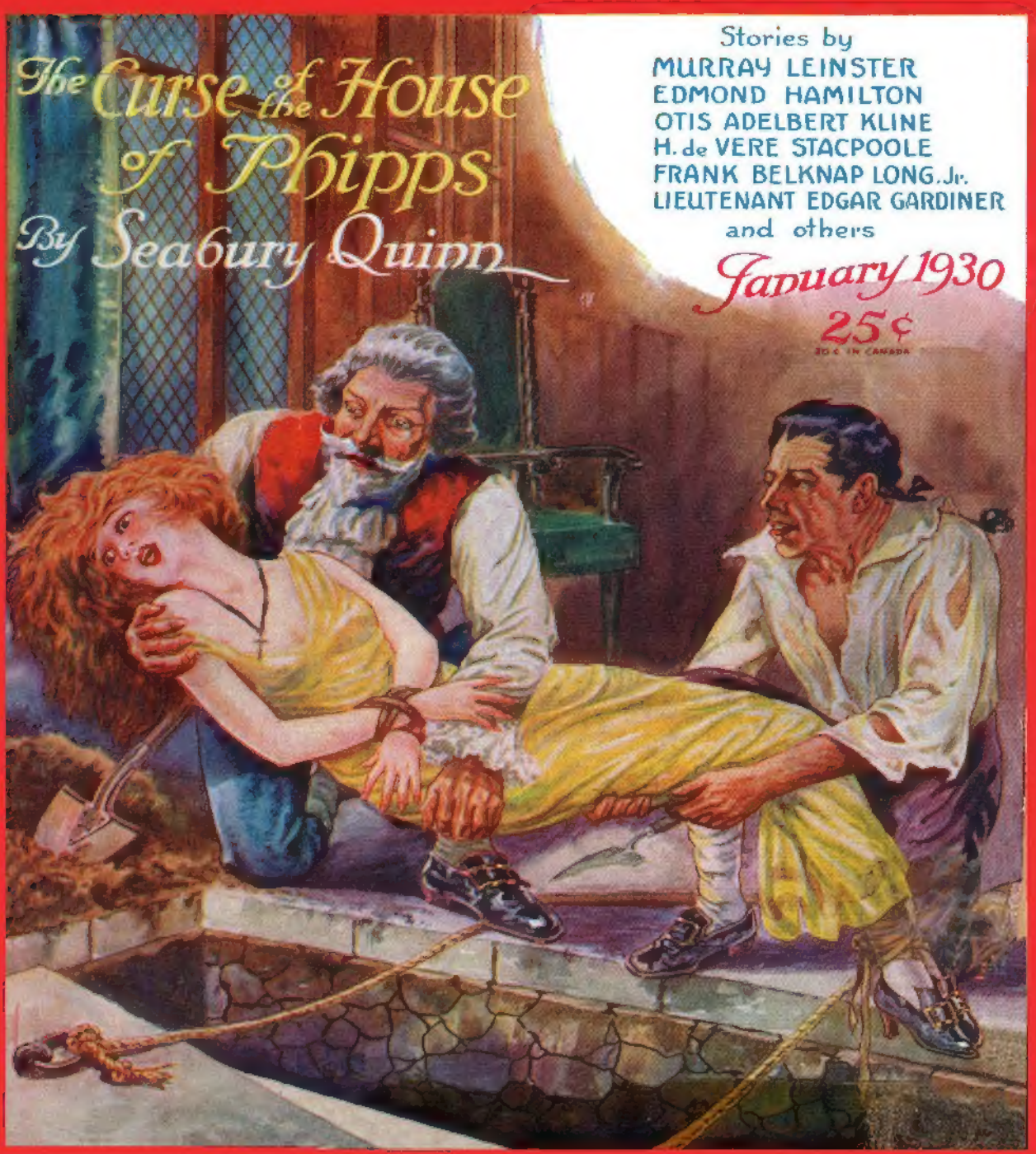

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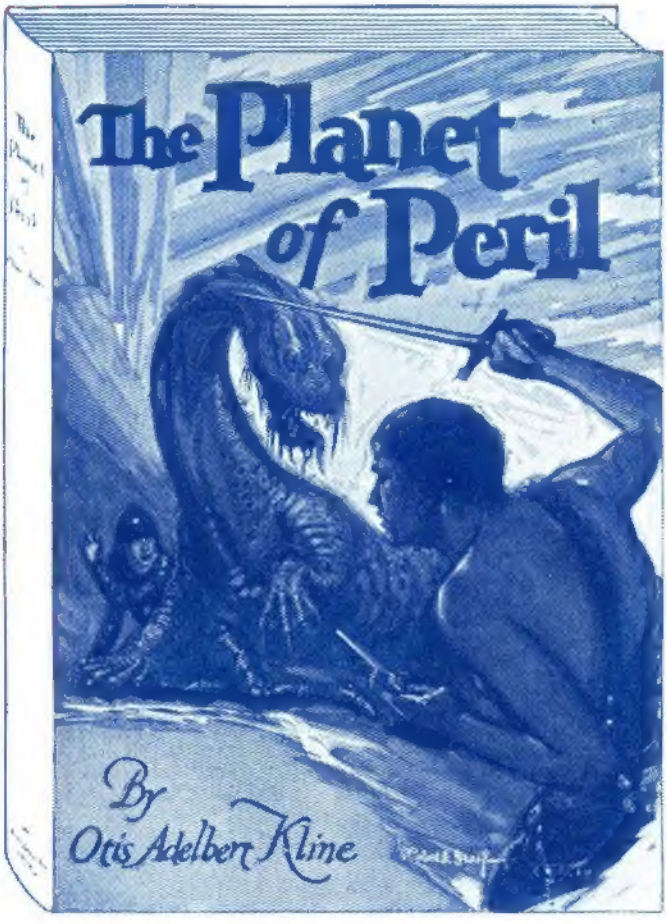

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A MAGAZINE of the BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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THE EYRIE

"WE MAY suppose that some years hence a few daring spirits looking for more worlds to conquer, will build a rocket-like machine, propelled by the expulsion of high-speed particles, and steered by directing the stream of particles one way or another. As their machine becomes perfected, the inventors will find that they are able to leave the earth's atmosphere and visit the moon and nearer planets. In the meantime there is discovered a new kind of fuel which emits particles of far greater speed than any known before, so that one bold inventor believes that if he takes a quantity of fuel large compared with the bulk of his machine he may be carried far beyond the bounds of the solar system. He makes the attempt, and by using the greater part of his fuel in one initial spurt he attains a speed within one-half of one per cent of the velocity of light. I shall not attempt to describe his sensations during this interval, but after he recovers and shuts off his accelerator he finds the most surprizing change in the appearance of the heavens. From the rear window everything has disappeared, even the sun which near the beginning of the acceleration still shone as a faint red disk; but through the front window he sees a dazzling array of stars of a brilliant blue color. Through the side windows the constellations come a little nearer to their customary appearance, and he sets himself to work upon daily astronomical measurements which prove so fascinating that five years pass in this pursuit. Suddenly he is alarmed, for his calculations show that in these five years he has proceeded to a point which seems to be fifty light years away from the earth. His several chronometers of different types are all in agreement; he has eaten his three meals a day and slept eight hours out of every twenty-four. He is sure there can be no mistake, yet nevertheless decides to return to the earth, and, using the greater part of his remaining fuel, he reverses his motion and proceeds homeward with the same speed as before. At the end of another five years he therefore approaches the earth, and, using his remaining fuel to retard his motion, he reaches the earth's atmosphere and parachutes down to a place near his former home. Just ten years ago, according to his chronom-

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(Continued from page 4)

eters, the newspapers were full of his daring exploit and of various predictions as to the likelihood of his return, and now he expects his arrival to produce an unparalleled sensation. But he finds everything changed; the people hardly understand him; and only after many bewildered questions does he realize that he is a second Rip Van Winkle, and that the day of his return is not a decade but a century later than the day of his departure. You will say that this is pure romancing, and surely there are grave doubts as to the feasibility of such a machine as I suggest; but, granting such a machine, no one who is acquainted with the elementary theory of relativity will deny that during the traveler's ten years' journey a century will have elapsed on the earth."

Does the foregoing paragraph sound to you like a wild fancy from some weird-scientific story by Edmond Hamilton or Ray Cummings? It is not. It is from *The Anatomy of Science,* a serious work by Gilbert N. Lewis, a chemist and scientist of note, who has himself contributed several important discoveries to the new science. He is not a pseudo-scientist, standing on what David Starr Jordan describes as "the lunatic fringe of science," but is a savant of established reputation, whose words must be listened to with respect. The foregoing paragraph by him shows that the new science dares to speculate in fully as imaginative a manner as the brilliant weird-scientific story-writers of today; and the wild adventures in time and space depicted for readers of WEIRD TALES by popular fictionists like Hamilton and Cummings are not out of key with the legitimate scientific thought of the day.

Elwin Charles Meyers and Artman Teodore Hall, who sign themselves "Two Weird Fans from Oakland, California," write to the Eyrie: "We will have a serious complaint to make if you discontinue publishing stories such as *The Chain, The Copper Bowl,* and *The Brass Key.* Stories of that type hold our undivided attention, and we wish to ask one question of those who complain about them in the Eyrie. Your magazine proclaims that it publishes the weird and bizarre; if these tales do not fall in that category we don't know of any that should. So if you want to keep enthusiastic WEIRD TALES fans, keep on publishing stories of that sort. Our favorite author is Seabury Quinn; in our estimation he has no equal for consistent good stories. We have never yet found one of his tales that we did not care to read, and we have been reading your magazine for six years, and have never missed a number since we started."

Mrs. J. C. Murphy writes from Long Island: "My congratulations on the Gaston Leroux stories, and on the continuation of the King Kull series by Robert E. Howard. That is unique stuff; it makes me feel like the *Idylls of the King,* filled up with thrills."

"The stories I liked best in the September and October WEIRD TALES," writes N. J. O'Neail, of Toronto, Canada, "were the reprints: *The Hound* (naturally, since it's Lovecraft's) and *The Lost Room*—although I'd read it

(Continued on page 8)

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(Continued from page 6)

before. Also liked *The Silver Countess* and *Skull-Face;* but please warn Robert E. Howard that the majority of readers will never forgive him if Skull-Face turns out to be a mere human being, instead of a bona-fide mummy."

Genevieve K. Sully, of Berkeley, California, writes to the Eyrie: "Several months ago I was much impressed with the story, *The Ninth Skeleton,* by Clark Ashton Smith, which appeared in your magazine. Your last issue prints a poem by the same author, *Nyctalops,* which is certainly one of the most original and haunting things I have read for a long time. A magazine which prints such high-class writing is deserving of praise, for most of the magazine poetry today is pretty poor stuff."

Eugene MacCrary, of Mentone, Califorina, writes to the Eyrie: "I believe your offering of stories is improving. I liked *The Roc Raid* best in the last issue; also liked *The Gray Killer* very much, and de Grandin was good again, after one or two of his stories not coming up to his ordinary high level, in my opinion. Give us a good interplanetary yarn frequently, and the occult as handled more in the psychological and less in the objective; because it seems to me that when the author produces a 'real' concrete horror he is very likely to weaken the terror, which, to be exquisite, should be intangible. I have lately reread Bishop Berkeley, and am ready to follow a story—if interesting—pretty nearly anywhere, without exclaiming: 'absurd and unnatural.' "

Readers, what is your favorite story in this issue? It will help us to keep the magazine in accordance with your wishes if you will let us know. Your favorite story in the November issue, as shown by your votes, was *The House Without a Mirror,* by Seabury Quinn.

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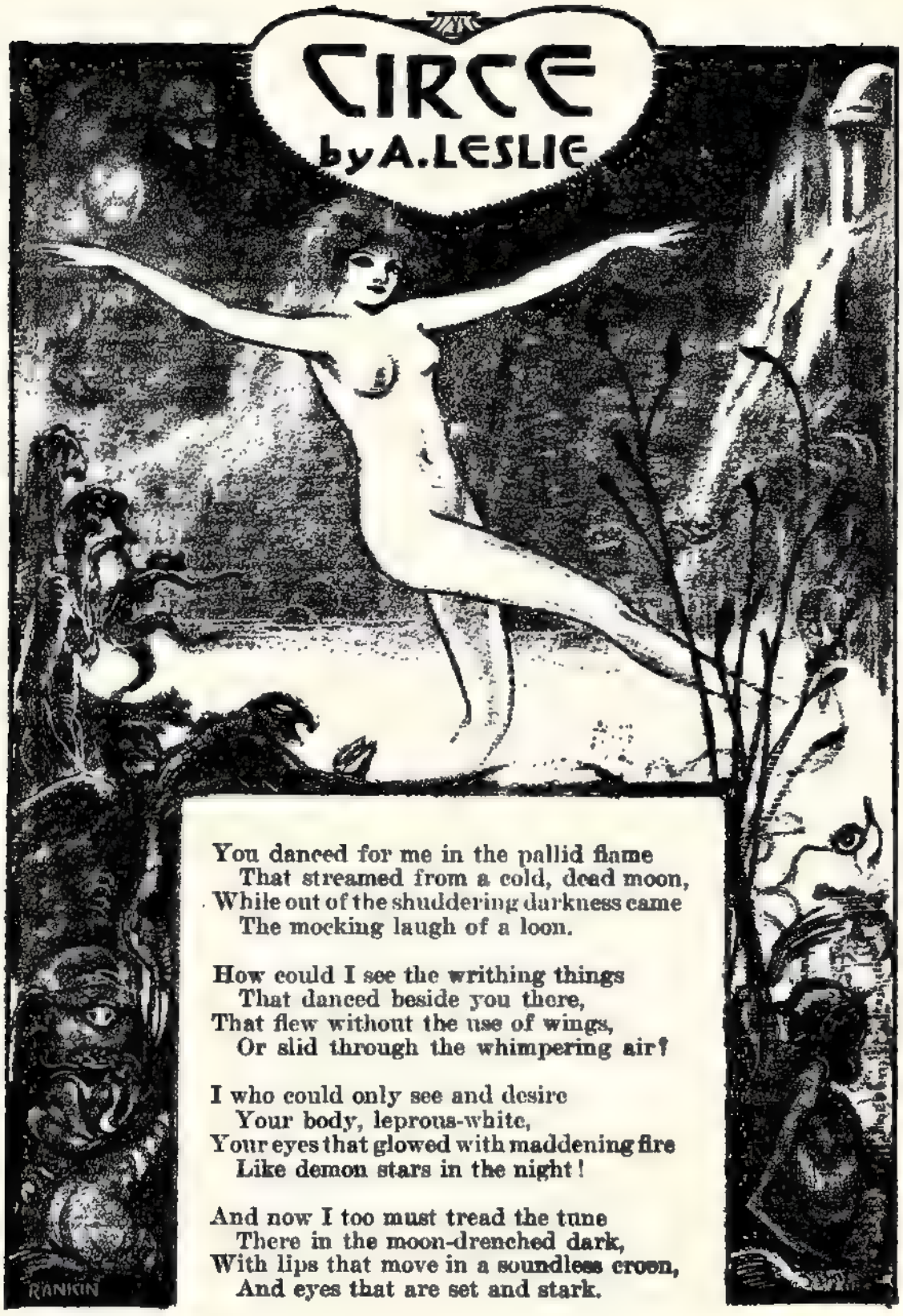

You danced for me in the pallid flame
That streamed from a cold, dead moon,
While out of the shuddering darkness came
The mocking laugh of a loon.

How could I see the writhing things
That danced beside you there,
That flew without the use of wings,
Or slid through the whimpering air?

I who could only see and desire
Your body, leprous-white,
Your eyes that glowed with maddening fire
Like demon stars in the night!

And now I too must tread the tune
There in the moon-drenched dark,
With lips that move in a soundless croon,
And eyes that are set and stark.

NEXT MONTH

Another unusually great lineup of fine stories is scheduled for the February issue of WEIRD TALES, on sale January 1.

Thirsty Blades

By Otis Adelbert Kline
and
E. Hoffmann Price

A powerful weird tale of the devil-worshipers of Kurdistan, of Azizah, the lovely niece of the Shareef of Tekrit, and the colossal duel between Abdemon and the Black Prince, Malik Taus himself.

The Daughter of Isis

By Hal K. Wells

It is redolent of the delicate exotic perfumes of old Egypt, this exquisite story of the beautiful Zhanthores, who could not die through the ages.

The Comet-Drivers

By Edmond Hamilton

From the void of space it came, a cosmic vampire looting the lives of universes—an unusually thrilling and startling weird-scientific novelette.

Piecemeal

By Oscar Cook

Fearful was the fate that befell Mendingham on a houseboat in London—a grim, powerful story of a weird crime.

The Curse Kiss

By Theodore Roscoe

An extraordinary and unusually fascinating narrative is this—a story about Lot's wife, who turned into a pillar of salt.

The Falling Knife

By Harold Markham

Meuriere promised Piron to save his sweetheart from the guillotine, but he failed—a weird story of the French Revolution.

The Black Monarch

By Paul Ernst

A thrilling, stupendous serial story of incarnate Evil—a vivid weird tale of underground adventures and colossal threats against civilization—the tale of an unthinkable doom hanging over mankind.

These are some of the super-excellent stories that will appear in the February issue of WEIRD TALES

February Issue on Sale January 1

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WEIRD TALES, 840 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago, Ill.

The Curse of the House

JULES DE GRANDIN drew a final long puff from his cigarette, ground the fire from its glowing butt out against the bottom of the cloisonné ash-tray and emitted a tapering cone of gray smoke from his pursed lips, regarding the young man seated across the study desk with thoughtfully narrowed eyes. "And your *gran'père*, likewise, *Monsieur?*" he asked.

"Yes, sir," the visitor returned, a slight flush darkening his tanned cheeks, "and my great-great-grandfather, and his father, too. Not a man of my branch of the family since old Joshua Phipps has lived to see his children. Joshua fell dead across the threshold of his wife's room ten minutes after she became a mother. Eliab Phipps, the son Joshua never saw, died in the last assault on Cornwal-

"Marguerite Du Pont sat erect in her bed, her eyes wide with terror."

lis' works at Yorktown. News traveled slowly in those days, but when the men of his command came back to Massachusetts they told his widow the details of their captain's death. All agreed he was shot through the lungs a little after ten in the morning. Half an hour earlier the same day his wife had given birth to a son. That son died at Buena Vista the same day *his* son was born back in Woolwich, Massachusetts, and that son, my grandfather, was shot in the draft riots in New York during the Civil War. His twin children, a son and daughter, were born the same night.

"I was born December 26, thirty years ago. The doctor sent my father post-haste to the drug store for some forgotten medicines, and as he returned from the errand a brick blew from a chimney, striking him on the head and killing him instantly. His wife became mother and widow almost at the same moment."

The young man paused with a short, hard laugh. "Call it superstition, coincidence — anything you

like," he went on challengingly, "but it's gotten to be an obsession with me. I can't shake the thought of it. It's driving me almost to frenzy, sir."

"*Perfaitement,*" the little Frenchman agreed with a nod. "You are *nerveux;* the remembrance of all these so remarkable deaths has bored into your inner thought like a maggot in a cheese. You are—how do you say it in American? *Sans bouc*—goatless?"

"Exactly," the other smiled wanly. "I'm just about shot to pieces with the thought of it. If it were something I could sink my hands in—something tangible I could shoot or stick a bayonet into—I'd stand up to it and say, 'You be damned!' but it's not. All the men of my family, except old Joshua, perhaps, seem to have been pretty good fellows, as far as I can make out. They fought their country's battles; they paid their debts; they were good to their wives, but—there it is. The birth of a child is the death warrant of every Phipps descended from Joshua of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and I don't mind admitting I'm frightened of this thing, whatever it is. I've been more than ordinarily successful in my work—I'm an architect, you know—and I've several good commissions to execute right now, but I just can't seem to get my mind working on' em. I've as much to live for as most men—work, achievement, possibly a woman's love and children of my own, some day; but there's this constant threat eating into me like a canker-worm, walking at my elbow, lying down to sleep with me and rising with me in the morning. I can't shake it any more than I could shake my skin, though I've done everything possible. It hangs on like Sindbad's Old Man of the Sea. I've consulted half a dozen of these so-called occultists, even went to a clairvoyant and a couple of mediums. Did they help? Like hell they did! They all say, 'Fear not, the evil from without can not prevail against the good that lies within you; cultivate inward tranquillity and seek the light of truth and be of good cheer,' or some sort of fiddle-faddle like that. I'm not after fairy-tale comfort, Dr. de Grandin; I want some assurance of safety, if it's to be had.

"Once I tried a psychoanalyst. He wasn't much better than the other quacks. Talked a lot of learned tosh about relative subconsciousness, fear-complexes and inhibitions, then assured me it was all in my mind—but you can damned well bet he couldn't explain why all my male ancestors died the instant they became fathers, and he didn't attempt to. Now"—the visitor straightened and looked almost challengingly into de Grandin's thoughtful eyes—"they tell me you're a scientist with an open mind. You don't slop over about the spirits of the departed, and you don't pooh-pooh any intimation of the supernatural. The mediums and occultists I've been to were a lot of ignorant charlatans. The psychoanalyst couldn't seem to grasp the idea that there's something more than the merely natural behind all this—he waved aside everything which couldn't be recorded on one of his instruments or which hadn't been catalogued by Freud. That's why I've come to you. I believe you can help me, if anyone can; if you can't do something for me, God have mercy. That's all there is to hope for if you fail, and it hasn't seemed to do much for the others."

"*Grand merci,*" the little Frenchman murmured almost ironically. "I greatly appreciate both your confidence and your frankness, *Monsieur.* Also, I concur in your pious wish that you may have the assistance of Deity. It may be true that heaven's mercy did little or nothing for your ancestors, but then, in the olden days, Providence was not assisted by Jules de Grandin. Today it is different. Suppose, now, we commence at the commencement, if you please. You have, perhaps, some intimation con-

cerning the untimely taking-off of your forebears? You have heard some possible reason why your so distinguished ancestor, Monsieur Joshua, found Death's grinning countenance where he thought to look upon the features of his first-born?"

"Yes!" young Phipps answered tersely, the flush mounting to his face again. "You'll probably call it a lot o' nonsense, but I'm convinced it's—it's a family curse!"

"U'm?" De Grandin thoughtfully selected a long, black cigar from the humidor, bit its end and struck a match. "You interest me, *Monsieur*. Tell me more. Who cursed your family, and why was it done, if you know?"

"Here," Phipps drew a small, brown-leather volume from the inner pocket of his jacket and thrust it into the Frenchman's hand, "you'll find the history of it there. Obediah Phipps, Joshua's younger brother, wrote it in his diary, 'way back in 1755. Start reading there; I've checked the salient entries in red," he indicated a dog-eared page of ancient, porous paper closely barred with fine writing in time-faded ink. "Obediah's comments may seem melodramatic, read in the cold light of the Twentieth Century," he added half apologetically, "but when we remember how Joshua fell strangled with blood at the entrance of his wife's chamber, and how his son and his son's sons died to a man without seeing their children, it doesn't seem so overdrawn, after all. Something else: Every man jack of 'em died in such a way that his mouth was smeared with blood. Oh, the old curse has been carried out, letter for letter, whether by coincidence or not!"

"U'm?" de Grandin repeated noncommittally, taking the slender booklet in his hand and examining its binding curiously.

It was a cap octavo volume, bound in beautifully tanned brown leather carved and embossed with scrolls, *œils-de-bœuf* and similar ornaments dear to the heart of Eighteenth Century bookbinders. Across the back was stamped in gold:

OBEDIAH PHIPPS
HIS JOURNAL

"Trowbridge, my friend," de Grandin ruffled quickly through the book's yellowed leaves, then passed it to me, "do you have the kindness to read to us that which this Monsieur Obediah—*mon Dieu*, what a name!—set down in the long ago. Me, I understand the barbarities of your language passably well, but I think we should get the fuller effect by hearing you read aloud. I greatly fear I should make sad hash of this old one's entries. Read on, my friend; I am all attention."

Adjusting my pince-nez I moved nearer the desk lamp, glanced hastily at the indicated page, then, bending closer, for the once-black ink had faded to pale sepia with the passage of two hundred years, I read:

"3d Sept. 1755—This day came the trained band from fighting with the French; Joshua, my brother, at their head and looking mighty fine and soldier-like in his scarlet coat and sash and the long sword which swung from his leathern baldric. With them are come a parcel of prisoners of war, holden at the King his Majesty's pleasure. Mostly children and young folk, they be, and though they be idolaters and not of our Christian faith, I find it in my heart to pity them for the hardness of their lot, for from this day onward must they be bearers of burdens, huers of wood and drawers of water, bound to menial service to our people that the Commonwealth's substance may not be eaten up in keeping them in idleness.

"What is it that I say? Obediah, it is well that you are for Harvard College and the law, for the sternness of the soldier's trade or the fiery Gospel of the Lord God expounded by the preachers are things too hard for

your silly heart, meseemeth. And yet, while none shall hear me murmur openly against the fate of these poor wretches, I do pity them with all my soul.

"One among them, of all the rest, arouseth my compassion. A lissome chit of a girl, she, with nut-brown hair and eyes as gray as is the sea, and such a yearning in her pale, frightened child-face as might move any man's heart. I hear tell she will be placed at sale on Wednesday next, though it is already understood that Brother Joshua will have her for household drudge in part requital of his valliant work against the enemy. If this be so, God pity the poor wench, for Joshua is a hard man and passionate, never sparing of himself or others, and ever prodigal with fist or whip to urge to greater diligence those who serve him. Already there have been murmurs amongst his black and Indian slaves against his harshness, but so great and dominant is he that none dare stand against him and charge him to his teeth with cruelty."

"*EH BIEN, Monsieur,*" remarked de Grandin as I sought the next marked passage in the diary, "it would seem this Monsieur Joshua of yours was the very devil of a fellow."

"Huh, you haven't got to first base yet," Phipps answered, but the grimness of his expression denied the lightness of his words.

I found the second red-checked entry and began:

"29h Sept. 1755—Have pity, gentle Saviour, for I, the meanest of Thy creatures and a sinfull man, harbour thoughts of blood and death against mine own kin. On Lord's Day I visited my brother, and as I made to enter at the kitchen did behold Marguerite DuPont, the Popish serving wench, bearing water from the well. A brace of heavy buckets, oaken-staved and bound with brass, she staggered under, and their weight was like to have borne her down, had not I hastened to her succour.

"A look of passing wonder she gave me as I took the bucket-yoke from off her shoulders and placed it on mine own, and, '*Merci beaucoup, M'sieu',*' she whispered, with the words dropping me a curtsey as though she were a free woman and mine equal in station.

"Her hands are red and rough with toil, but small and finely made, and in the wide greyness of her eyes dwells that to make a man's heart beat faster. Perchance she is a witch, like most of the idolators, as Parson did expound at meeting that very morning, and works wickedness on men, to the damnation of their souls and bodies. Howbeit, she is very fair to look on, nor do I take shame to myself for that I took her burthen on me.

"'*C'est le sabbat, n'est-ce-pas, M'sieu'?*' she asks as I set the buckets down beside the doorstep, and when I nodded, she looked at me so sadly that I was like to weep for very pity.

"From out the bodice of her gown she drew a tiny, cross-shaped thing, a bit of sinfull vanity fashioned like the tree whereon our Lord suffered for the vileness of humankind, and would have raised the symbol to her lips.

"'And what means this heathenry, ye Papist slut?' bellows my brother Joshua, bursting from the house-door like a watch-dog from out his kennel at scent of a marauder. 'What means such demonry in a Christian man's house?' with which he struck the fond thing from her hand and caught her such a cuff upon the ear that down she fell beside it.

"Quickly the lass picked the cross from out the sand and would have bestowed it in her breast again, but Joshua was quicker than she, maugre his towering bulk, and ground it under heel, well-nigh crushing her frail hand.

"She sprang erect like a panther-

ess, her mild eyes all aflame, her cheeks red with rage, and defied him to his face.

"'Thou harlot's brat, I'll learn ye to speak so to your betters!' raged he, and struck her on the lips with his clenched hand, so that blood flowed down her chin upon her kirtle.

"'Nay, brother,' I opposed, 'entreat her not thus despitefully. 'Tis Lord's Day, and she, of all the townsfolk, labours. "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy," saith the Scripture. And as for her vanity in kissing the cross, bethink you that her faith, mistaken though it be, is dear to her as ours is to us.'

"'Now as the Lord liveth,' my brother sware, 'meseemeth thou art half a Papist thyself, Sir Cockerel. Whence cometh this sudden courage to champion the Popish slut? The Sabbath Day, quotha? What knows she of sabbaths, save those wherein the witches and warlocks make merry? Is she not already foredoomed by God his great mercy to burn in hell from everlasting unto everlasting? Sabbath rest and meditation are for the Lord's elect, not such as she. As for thee, go thy ways, and quickly, else I forget thou art my brother, though but a sniveling coward, and do thee injury.'

"Lord Christ, forgive! In that moment I could have slain him where he stood, nor took a thought of guilt for doing it. Alas, in thought, if not in deed, I am another Cain!"

"2d Nov. '55," the next marked entry read. "At college, and hard upon my studies all the day, labouring right toilsomely with the middle voice of Greek, yet making sorry business of it.

"*Mea culpa;* I have sinned. Into my heart has crept insidiously a lustfull and unhallowed love, for between mine eyes and the book wherein I read there floats the vision of the kitchen-drudge, the French girl, Marguerite DuPont.

"What boots it that she be a servant of the Antichrist, a beggar and a charge upon the town, bound forever to labour for her scanty fare? What matter though she be joined to her idols like Ephraim of old? Surely, though we approach God through Christ, our Lord and Saviour, or through Mary, His maid-mother, the goal we seek is still the same, however different be our roads. And yet I may not tell her of my love; I dare not clip her in mine arms and whisper 'dearments to her, for she is my brother's thing and chattel, bound to him even as his blackamoors and Indians, though by the letter of the law she is a war-captive and subject to release or ransom or exchange. Wo me, that I have loved a Hagar in the tents of Abraham!"

"Death of a little blue man, Friend Trowbridge"—de Grandin twisted the waxed tips of his small blond mustache—"I damn think I sniff the odor of a romance here. Read on, proceed, I pray you. I burn, I itch, I am consumed with desire for further information!"

"9h June, '56," I read, turning to the next entry marked in red. "O Lord Christ, fill me plentifully with love of Thee, for love of woman never shall be mine! This day sennight Marguerite gave birth to a child, a boy. She holds her peace right stubbornly, though many of the good wives, and even the Parson himself, have urged her to declare her partner in iniquity that he may stand his trial with her for adultery. Anon, when she be taken from her bed, she must make response for this her sin, and if her paramour be not discovered, must bear the brunt upon herself.

"Brother Joshua shows strange kindness for one so stern and upright, so ever hatefull of all sin. The child is cared for by his orders, and he has even visited the wretched mother to see that all goes well with her. Forgive me, brother, I did thee wrong when I declared thy heart was like a flint. Methinks Marguerite is grate-

full for this unexpected comfort, for her eyes brighten when he entereth the room, and dwell on him with the look a gentle dog may give its master when he leaves. The child is dark, unlike its mother, and well favoured withal. 'Tis pity it must go through life as *filius nullius*, according to the lawyers' phrase."

"My brother builds a house without the town," the next entry, dated early in December, read. "The foundations are already digged, and soon the chimneys will be raised. The idea likes me much, for when the building is completed he will take Marguerite and the child to dwell with him, and she shall thus have respite from the townsfolk's jeers. O Marguerite, my Marguerite, how fondly would I have held thee to my heart, had I but dared; but now it is too late—have pity, Heaven!—too late!"

"Joshua's charity is explained," the next passage, which was undated, announced. "'Twas passing strange that he, who would have flayed a flea for its hide and tallow, should expend money on a bond-woman's brat thus lavishly. Alas, the child she bore is his. Woe unto you, Joshua, my brother, for you have devoured the fatherless! A man of war you call yourself, a valliant battler for the Lord, yet did you hide your shame behind a woman's petticoat, and leave her lonely to brave the storm of calumny, while she, for very loyalty to you, her child's father, forbore to name you to the elders, though they protested never so much.

"25h Dec. 1756—Wo and calamity. The light has gone from out the stars and the sun is consumed in darkness. Marguerite is no more, and on my brother's brow there sits indelibly the mark of Cain. From Cudjo, his blackamoor slave, I have the story, and though I may not denounce him to the court, for that I have only my unsupported word, since slave may not testify against his master, yet here and now I brand him murderer. Joshua, my brother, *Thou art the man!*

"Together with his black slaves and his Indians, as cut-throat a crew as ever hung in irons, my brother did repair to his new house to lay the hearth. With him went Marguerite and the child. In the darkness of the night he heard her singing softly, and entering her room found her suckling the boy, and round his baby neck she had hanged a garland of plaited vines and from it hung a cross.

"Wild with rage, my brother seized the child from out her arms, and made as though to brain it against the wall, whereat she rose up like a she-bear which sees her cubs threatened, and snatched a dagger from her dress, wherewith she wounded him in the breast.

"'What, wouldst murder thy benefactor, slut?' he bellowed, and the greatness of his angry voice roared through the half-built house like winter tempests through the forest-aisles. 'By Abraham and Isaac, and by that Joshua whose name I bear, we'll lay the hearth tomorrow morn according to the ancient rites, and my house shall have that to guard it which none other in the colony may boast!'

"With that he summoned help to bind her to the bed and bare the child away.

"At sun-up next day they heard her singing in her chamber, '*Venite adoremus,*' the hymn wherewith the Papists greet the Christmastide, but Joshua laughed deeply in his beard and sware a great oath and vowed they'd give her other tunes to sing e'er that day's work be finished.

"When all had been prepared they brought her forth, all bound like any captive for the gallows, and led her to the hearth-place, where a great hole had been digged beneath the setting for the stone.

"At first she did not understand, but presently they made her know that she must be immured alive with-

in that stone-sided grave, for that, my brother saith, her spirit might protect his house and all that therein dwelt. And as he said it he laughed a great laugh, and pointed to his wounded breast wherein her dagger had been fleshed the night before.

"And now she knew her end was come, and hope had fled from her, so there upon the threshold of the grave to which she must all quick descend, she stood and cursed him in the English tongue she scarce could frame to form aright.

" 'Wo to thee, defiler of the innocent and craven hider of thy shame,' she told him. 'May the wrath of God be on thy head and countenance, and may thou and thy sons and thy sons' sons from generation unto generation have blood to drink in that hour wherein thy first-born is delivered. May thou and thy seed never look on the faces of thy children or on thy wives in motherhood, and may this curse last while hate shall last and be strong as hatred is strong!'

"What more she would have said they know not, for even Joshua paled before her maledictions, and gave the signal whereat his myrmidons laid her living in the open grave and set the hearth-stone over her. Thereafter they fixed the stone right firmly with cement, and none could hear her cries as she struggled in the tomb like a drowning man fighting for the breath of life."

DE GRANDIN was leaning forward in his chair, and his little, round blue eyes were fixed on me in a set, unwinking stare as I turned to the next entry. Once or twice his long, flexible fingers twitched nervously, and I had no difficulty in imagining what would have happened to old Joshua Phipps could the wiry little Frenchman have set those steel-strong fingers round his hairy throat. Dapper as a dandy, slightly made as an adolescent girl, Jules de Grandin is none the less a born killer, and when his anger is aroused he can, to use the old frontier phrase, "whip his weight in wildcats," and have both strength and inclination left to fight a fresh lot to the death.

Young Phipps, too, sat stone-still in his chair, his breath rasping harshly in his throat as he listened to this tragedy of old New England, and, it seemed to me, the very atmosphere of my peaceful study was pregnant with the presence of those tragic actors whose bodies had molded to dust long years before any of us had seen the light of day.

"3d Mar. '58," I read. "Joshua this day wed with Martha Partridge."

The next item was the last in the book, and seemed fresher than the others, for the ink retained some semblance of its original blackness:

"25h Dec. 1758—The curse has fallen. This night, Martha, my brother's wife, who hath been gravid, was delivered of a son whom they will call Eliab. Joshua sate before the fire in his great chair, gazing into the flames and on the hearth-stone which hides the evidence of the filthy act he wrought two little years agone, and thinking the Lord God knows only what thoughts. Did you see Marguerite's pale face in the flames, brother, and did the wind in the chimney recall her pleading voice to you as you waited on the midwife's summons to ascend the stairs? Who shall say?

"Anon they came and said he had a son, and straightway he rose up and went to look on him. At the entrance to his wife's chamber he paused to cast a downward look of triumph at the great flat stone which shelters her whose curse he bore, then laid his hand upon the door-knob.

"And in that moment he who never knew adversity save to conquer it tasted salt and bitterness, for even as he flung aside the door he fell upon his face, and from his open lips gushed forth a spate of blood which dyed his beard a ruddy hue and stained the

planking of the floor. He never saw the features of his lawfull first-born son.

"Have pity, Jesu!"

IT WAS dead-still in the study as I closed the little book in which Obediah Phipps had scrawled his record of futile love and stark tragedy. The soft hiss of a pine log in the fireplace sounded distinctly through the shadows and the mournful hoot of a motor horn outside came to us through the closed and curtained windows like a doleful period to the tale.

"It sounds fantastic to me," I commented, returning the book to young Edwin Phipps. "I remember the Acadians were expatriated by the New England colonists during King George's War—Longfellow tells the story in *Evangeline*—but I never heard the poor devils were made virtual slaves by the New Englanders, or that they——"

"Many unpleasant things concerning our histories we easily forget, my friend," de Grandin reminded with a slightly sarcastic smile. "Your Monsieur Whittier takes up the tale where Monsieur Longfellow leaves off. However"—he raised his shoulders in a quick shrug—"why hold resentment? The crime the ancestors committed against New France was nobly atoned for by their descendants. Did not the young men of your Yankee Division pour out their virile blood like water in one vast transfusion when *la belle France* bled white with the *sale Boche's* bayonet wounds? But yes. Meanwhile, the descendants of these very Acadians rested comfortably at home, enjoying the protection of Britain's arm, yet lifting no hand to help the land from whence they sprang. I——"

"But that other," I interrupted, for, like all true Frenchmen, my little friend will talk for hours on the war, "that seems preposterous to me. The idea of burying a live woman beneath a hearthstone—why, it's incredible. Such things might have been done in heathen times, but——"

"*Hélas*, Friend Trowbridge, your ecclesiastical learning seems little greater than your political knowledge," de Grandin cut in. "Those older ones, both pagan and Christian, laid the foundations of their houses and fortresses—even their churches—in blood. Yes. Saint Columba, founder of the abbey of Iona, inhumed one of his monks named Oran alive beneath the walls, because he feared the demons of the earth might tear the holy structure down unless appeased by human sacrifice. Later historians have endeavored to sugar-coat the facts, but—later writers have revised the story of *Chaperone Rouge* to make the little girl and her *gran'-mère* come forth alive from the wolf's belly, also.

"Again, no later than 1885, was found another evidence of such deeds done by Christians. That year the parish church of Holsworthy, in north Devonshire, England, was restored, and in the southwest angle-wall the workmen found a human skeleton interred, and its mouth- and nose-places were stopped with mortar. The evidence was plain; it was a live-burial designed to make the walls stand stedfast because of human sacrifice to the earth-demons. Once more: In tearing down an ancient house in Lincolnshire the workmen found a baby's skeleton beneath the hearth. Yes, my friends, such things were undoubtlesly done in the olden times, and our Monsieur Joshua was but reviving a dead-but-not-forgotten custom of the past when he did lay the poor one, Marguerite, beneath his hearth."

"H'm," I reflected, "it hardly seems possible such bigotry could have obtained so late, though; just think, the Revolutionary War began only some fifteen years later, yet here was a man so intolerant that——"

"*Eh bien*," the Frenchman chuckled, "again you do forget, my friend.

Your war of revolution was fought and won, also your second war with England, and our own so glorious Revolution was an accomplished fact while yet Catholics burned Protestant and Jew with fine impartiality. It was 1814 when Spain's last *auto da fé* was held. However, we grow unduly reminiscent. It is with Monsieur Phipps' problem we must deal.

"Tell me, young *Monsieur,*" he turned directly to our visitor, "is this house of blood and sorrow where your wicked ancestor met his death still standing, and if so, where?"

"Yes," Phipps replied. "I've never been there, but it's still owned by the family, though it's been unoccupied for twenty-five years or more. I'm told it's in remarkably good condition, however. It stands just outside the present city of Woolwich, Massachusetts."

"H'm," de Grandin took his narrow chin between a thoughtful thumb and forefinger, "I think we should be well advised to go there without delay, my friend."

"What, out to that old ruin, *now?*" Phipps demanded.

"But of course. When water is polluted the wise man seeks the source of the stream. It seems to me the fountainhead of this family curse of yours may well be found where Marguerite DuPont lies buried in a grave of hatred without benefit of clergy or the tribute of a single tear, save such as your great-uncle Obediah may have shed for her in secret."

"CAB, sir? Taxi? Take you to the best hotel in town," a lean, lank Yankee youth challenged as we alighted from the B. & M. train and lugged our handbags from the Woolwich station.

"*Holà, mon brave,*" de Grandin challenged in his turn, "you know the country hereabouts, I doubt not—and the old-time landmarks, as well?"

"Ought to," the other answered with a grin, "been here all my life."

"*Très bon,* excellent; you are the man we seek, and none other. Tell me, can you deliver us in good condition at the old Phipps homestead—you know the place?"

An expression of blank amazement, half fright, half disbelief, came on the jehu's lean, weather-stained face. The Frenchman's request, it seemed, was much like that of a tourist in Naples directing that he be forthwith driven to the rim of Vesuvius' crater.

"D'ye mean ye want to *go* there?" the youth demanded.

"Utterly," de Grandin returned. "It still stands and may be reached, may it not?"

"Oh, yeah, you can *git* there all right," the other responded doubtfully, "but——"

"But getting back is something else again, *n'est-ce-pas?*" the little Frenchman retorted with one of his quick, infectious smiles. "No matter. Do you transport us thither; we shall take responsibility for the rest."

The youth led us to a dilapidated Ford which got under way protestingly and seemed in imminent peril of dropping to pieces at almost every revolution of its wheels, but somehow took us through the wide, well kept streets of the newer part of town, along a smooth macadamed highway between rows of pretty white houses, finally up a rutty clay-surfaced road to the massive cedar gate-posts of a wide and weed-choked park.

"*Enfin,* we are arrived, it seems," de Grandin announced as we alighted. "Do you bear a hand with the portmanteaux, *mon vieux,*" he tapped the driver on the arm as I felt in my pocket for the fares.

"No, *sir,* not me," the other declared with emphasis. "I contracted to bring ye here, an' I done it; but nothin' was said about me goin' into that place, an' I ain't goin', neether!"

"Eh, what do you tell me?" de Grandin tweaked his mustache ends alternately. "Is it then, perhaps, a place of evil reputation?"

"*Is* it?" the driver echoed. "Say, brother, you couldn't get the State militia to camp in them grounds overnight, an' I don't mean maybe. O' course, *I* don't believe in ghosts nor nothin' like that, but——"

"*Certainement*, so much is evident," the Frenchman's features creased in one of his quick, elfin smiles, "but at the same time you prefer not to test your disbeliefs too strongly, is it not? Very well; we thank you for the transportation; as to that in which you disbelieve so staunchly, we shall endeavor to cope with it unaided—also with the burden of our luggage."

The old Phipps farmhouse was, as Edwin had told us, in remarkably good repair for its age and the neglect it had suffered during the past quarter-century. Built at the time when Georgian elegance was just beginning to impress itself on the ruder architecture of the colony, it presented a curiously hybrid appearance. A rounded bay climbed the full height of its façade, porticoes supported by once-white columns ran along the front, but all its many windows were firmly closed with heavy, slab-wood shutters. The door which pierced the center of the building was of adz-cut timber, roughly smoothed with a jack-plane and hung on massive "holy Lord" hinges of hand-wrought iron. It seemed strong enough to withstand a siege supported by anything less than modern artillery.

Edwin Phipps produced a key of hammered brass which seemed to me massive enough to have locked the Bastille, fitted it in the iron-rimmed keyhole and shot back the bolts. Hardly conscious that I did so, I wondered that the lock should work thus readily after so many years of disuse.

"*Entrez*," de Grandin stood aside and waved us forward; "the great adventure is begun, my friends."

The room we entered was like a setting on a stage. Obviously, it was originally intended as both entrance-hall and living-room, possibly as dining-room as well. Lofty and paneled in some sort of age-darkened wood, with an open fireplace large enough to drive a limousine through in the blank wall to the left, it gave me the impression of immensity and chill one gets in going through a Continental cathedral. A broad staircase, balustraded in hand-wrought oak, ran up to a gallery above, whence three doors, one to the right, two to the left, gave off. There were also doors letting through the right wall of the hall, but none to the left. At the stairway's foot, by way of newel post, stood a massive bronze cannon, muzzle down, evidently the spoil of some raid led by Joshua Phipps against the French, for engraved on its breach were the Bourbon arms and a regal crown surmounting a flourishing capital *L*. A great table of Flemish oak stood near the center of the hall; several straight-backed chairs, faded and moldering with age, stood sentry against the walls. Before the monstrous, gaping fireplace, almost on the hearthstone, yawned a massive arm-chair upholstered in tattered Spanish leather. I wondered if this could be the "great chair" in which old Joshua sat meditating that night so long ago when the midwife came to call him to his son, and to the doom pronounced on him and his by the martyred French girl.

De Grandin glanced appraisingly about the place and shook his shoulders as though a chill even more bitter than that of the December day had pierced his fur-lined greatcoat. "*Pour l'amour d'un bouc*, a little fire would help this place immensely," he murmured. "Phipps, my friend, do you dispose our belongings as seems good to you. Trowbridge, *mon vieux*, by your leave you and I will sally forth in search of fuel for yonder fireplace. *Pardieu*, I damn think it will require an entire forest to warm this place to hospitality once more!"

We had included a pair of Boy Scout axes in our outfit, and in a few

minutes cut a plentiful supply of dry wood from the fallen trees in the grove outside.

"*Mille pardons,* little one," de Grandin murmured almost humbly as he crossed the wide slate hearthstone to lay the logs in the fireplace; we do not tread upon your grave with wanton feet."

The short New England twilight faded into dark almost before we had completed preparations for the night. We ate a dinner of fried bacon and potatoes, washed down with plentiful drafts of strong boiled coffee, set up our camp cots on the flagstone floor of the great hall and rolled ourselves in several thicknesses of blankets before ten o'clock had sounded on the tiny folding clock de Grandin had taken from his kit bag.

"*Bonne nuit,* my friends," he murmured sleepily. "Let us sleep like a clear conscience this night, for we have much to do tomorrow."

THE fire had died to a sullen, smoldering ruin and the blackness the leaping flames had driven back once more advanced from the corners of the great, cold hall like a hostile army counter-attacking doggedly, when I wakened with a start. Had I been dreaming, or had there actually been a Presence bending over me, I wondered as I opened sleepy eyes and glanced about. Whatever it was, it had not been hostile, that I knew. For a moment, while I crossed the no man's land between sleep and waking, I had sensed something, something white and slim, bending above me, a pleasant, comforting something like a mother soothing her restless child in the night—smooth, calming hands passing lightly over my features, a gentle, murmuring voice, a faint, familiar lovely scent breathing through the darkness.

"Trowbridge, *mon ami,* did you see —did you feel it?" de Grandin's sharp, sibilant whisper came to me.

"Ye-es, I think so——" I began, but stopped abruptly at the sound from Phipps' cot.

"*Ug—ou!*" Half exclamation, half frightened, strangling cry it was, and in the quarter-light we saw him rear upright from his blankets, fighting and wrestling for his life with something invisible to us.

Before either de Grandin or I could reach him he rolled from his bed, threshed wildly about the stone floor, then lay still, panting deeply. "It—something tried to choke me!" he gasped as we rushed to his aid. "I was sleeping, and dreamed someone —a woman, I think—bent over me, stroking my cheeks and forehead, then suddenly it—whatever it was—seemed to change, to go savage as a lunatic, and grasped me by the throat. Lord, I thought I was done for, for a while!"

He rose with an effort, accepted a sip of brandy from de Grandin's flask, then sank down on his cot, feeling gingerly at his neck. " 'Spect it was a dream," he murmured with a shamefaced grin, "but 'such stuff as dreams are made on' is mighty solid hereabouts, if it were. Ugh, I can feel those long, bony fingers squeezing my gullet yet!"

I was about to reply with some soothing commonplace remark when de Grandin's minatory hiss and upraised finger cut me short. Distinctly through the outside darkness came the echo of a shot, a second report, and a woman's wailing, terrified scream, both curiously faint and far-away seeming, like the sound of a gramophone played in a distant room with closed doors between.

For a moment we waited tensely, then, as the woman's cry was repeated, nearer, this time, de Grandin crossed hastily to the front door, snatched up his coat, and flung the portal open. Instantly the muffled quality of the sounds was explained. While we slept before the fire a tor-

rential rainstorm had come up, and, though there was little wind, the skies seemed suddenly converted into sieves which let down countless cataracts of black water.

As I joined him at the door and peered intently through the drumming rain, I descried some kind of indistinct form blundering and splashing through the welter of mud and water and heard another faint hail: "Help, please help me!"

Side by side the Frenchman and I dashed into the storm, seized the half-fainting girl and dragged her to the shelter of the house.

"Thanks!" she gasped, shaking her head to clear the water from her eyes. "I think I'd have been done in another moment if — you — hadn't——" her voice trailed off, and she bent limply at the knees, as though her bones had suddenly softened, landing in an inert little huddle on the hall's stone floor.

"*Mademoiselle!*" de Grandin cried in quick concern, bending over her, "*Mademoiselle*, you are—*grand Dieu*, Friend Trowbridge, she is wounded!"

It was so. On the left arm of the suede trench coat she wore showed a spot of angry red, and as I leaned down beside de Grandin to help him take away the garment, I saw the leather was pierced by two small holes, one at the rear of the sleeve, the other at the front. Obviously, a bullet-wound.

Working quickly, we removed the girl's overcoat and Fair Isle sports vest, then washed and bandaged the wound as best we could. For lack of better styptics we made a pack of boric acid powder, of which we fortunately had a small can, and crushed aspirin tablets, thus approximating Senn's first-aid dressing. For bandage we requisitioned three clean handkerchiefs from de Grandin's dressing-case. Tearing a towel longwise, we knotted it behind her neck and contrived a fairly satisfactory sling.

"How comes it, *Mademoiselle*, that you flee wounded through the storm?" de Grandin asked, removing the cup of brandy and water from her lips and watching her returning consciousness with keenest satisfaction. "What *sacré bête* has done this monstrous thing? *Cordieu*, tell me his name, and I shall twist his neck so thoroughly that in future he must walk backward to see what lies before him!"

The girl gave him a smile that was half a grin and wrinkled her nose at him. "I only wish I knew," she answered. "I'd help you do it.

"Joe Darnley and I were driving home from Branchmoor when this storm hit us like a circus tent collapsing. The water must have gotten into the gadget that works the jiggermacrank, or something, for we went dead at the foot of the lane leading here. The storm had us all turned 'round, and neither of us knew just where we were, so while he got out to tinker with the thingummy in the engine I looked around for landmarks. Just as he got the motor to working and we were ready to start, another car came rushing down the road—no lights going, either!—and someone in it shouted for us to get to hell out of there. Guess we didn't move fast enough to suit 'em, for one of them fired on us and struck me in the arm. It hurts like fury, too!" She made a little face, then turned to de Grandin with a brave effort at a smile.

"Joe Darnley's a swine. The contemptible thing stepped on the gas and left me there, wounded and lost. Then I screamed for help and started to run—I didn't realize which way I ran; just ran, that's all. In a few minutes I saw your light, and—here I am." She gave de Grandin another friendly smile, then seemed to stiffen with sudden frightened realization.

"I say," she demanded, "this is the old Phipps house, isn't it? Who—who are you? What are you doing here? I thought this place was deserted — I've always heard it was haunted by ——" She broke off with another effort at a smile, but it was easy to see the local superstition was troubling her.

"*Eh bien,* that is a long story, *Mademoiselle,*" de Grandin answered. "However, we are quite lawfully in possession, I assure you. *Permettez-moi, s'il vous plaît:* This is Monsieur Edwin Phipps, one of the owners of the property; this Dr. Samuel Trowbridge, of Harrisonville, New Jersey. I am Jules de Grandin, of Paris and elsewhere, all very much at your service."

She nodded in frank friendliness. "It's no mere figure of speech when I tell you I'm glad to meet you," she assured us. "My name's DuPont—Marguerite DuPont, of Woolwich, Massachusetts, very much in your debt for services rendered, gentlemen."

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed.

"Marguerite DuPont!" young Phipps repeated in a sort of awed whisper.

"*Sacré nom d'un fromage!* Is it so?" de Grandin ejaculated.

She regarded us with a sort of puzzled resentment. "Of course, it's so!" she answered. "Why shouldn't it be? It's a good name, isn't it?"

"Good?" de Grandin echoed. "*O, lá lá,* it is a most excellent good name, indeed!" Then:

"Your pardon, *Mademoiselle.* That name is connected most intimately with the tragic history of this sad and bloody old house, and the coincidence struck us all with force. Tomorrow, or the next day, or the next day after that, when you are feeling stronger, we shall explain in detail. Now, if you please, you shall lie down and rest. We shall take especial pains that no harm comes to one of your name in this place, of all others."

After some good-natured argument, we agreed that the girl should occupy Phipps's cot, for the similarity of the charming guest's name to the author of the family curse seemed to have completely unnerved the youngster, and he declared sleep impossible.

Nevertheless, we all dropped off after a time, de Grandin once more rolled in his blankets like an Indian, I lying on my cot watching the leaping flames of the replenished fire, the girl sleeping lightly as a child, her uninjured hand pillowing her cheek; Edwin Phipps sat humped forward in his ancestor's great chair before the fireplace.

IT WAS Marguerite's stifled terrified scream which awakened me. Bolt upright, wide awake as though sleep had not visited my lids, I looked about the great dark hall. Phipps still nodded in the deep leather chair before the smoldering remnant of the fire; de Grandin, apparently, slept undisturbed in his blankets; Marguerite DuPont sat erect in her bed, her eyes wide with terror, her lips parted to emit another horrified cry.

A creak on the wide, oaken stairs leading from the gallery diverted my attention from the frightened girl. Slowly, seeming more to float than to walk, a tall, white-draped form descended the stairs, and behind the folds of fluttering winding-sheet I espied the burning, phosphorescent glow of a pair of dreadful, luminous eyes fixed on us with a gaze of direful fury.

"*Conjuro te, sceleratissime, abire ad locum tuum!*" the sonorous words of the Latin exorcism rang through the high-ceiled, echoing hall as de Grandin, now thoroughly awake, hurled them at the gigantic, white-shrouded form bearing down on us.

A moment he paused, as though to test the efficacy of the spell. From

the fluttering folds of the advancing thing's cerements there burst a sudden yell of wild, derisive laughter; mad laughter, which seemed to sound the death-knell of all sanity. Time stood still for us as the delirious peal sounded again through the dark place. Then:

"*Ha*—so? *Pardieu*, you would make one *sacré singe* of Jules de Grandin, *hein?*" The Frenchman had risen from his bed, his little, round blue eyes ablaze with concentrated, deadly fury, and the dying firelight glinted balefully on the blue-steel barrel of his pistol.

The shots, following each other in such quick succession that they seemed a single prolonged report, bellowed through the gloom, and the sharp, acrid fumes of cordite stung our nostrils.

The mocking laugh stopped short, like a tuned-out radio, and the sheeted thing wilted, toppled crashing down the last half-dozen steps, and lay twitching spasmodically on the stone floor before us.

"Good heavens!" I gasped. "I—I thought it was a—a——"

"*Un fantôme*, eh?" de Grandin supplied with a half amused, half hysterical laugh. "Me, I think that was the intention of the masquerade, my friend. Also, I damnation think they set their stage poorly. In the first dullness of my awakening, I also was deceived, but I heard a step creak beneath his tread, and ghosts do not cause squeaky boards to complain as they walk upon them, Friend Trowbridge. *Alors*, I turned from exorcism to execution, and"—he indicated the prostrate form before us—"it would seem I made a real ghost where a make-believe one was before. I am skilful at that, my friend."

Bending above the sheeted figure he drew aside its wrappings. Beneath the shrouding of cheesecloth was a frame of light wickerwork attached to the man's shoulders, giving him the appearance of being at least ten feet tall. At the top of the frame was fixed a globular arrangement of papier-mâché through which two eyeholes were pierced. Behind each of these burned a small electric flashlight with a green-glass bulb. This accounted for the glare of ghostly eyes we had seen in the specter's shrouded face.

The man within the winding-sheet was dead. Six tiny nickel-capped bullets from de Grandin's vicious little Belgian automatic had riddled his chest within an area which might be covered by the palm of a man's hand, and from the corners of the dead man's mouth there trickled twin streamlets of blood from his punctured lungs.

"Why, it's Claude Phipps!" Marguerite DuPont's awe-stricken voice announced. Frightened almost senseless at sight of what she thought a ghost, she had completely regained her courage when the visitant fell before de Grandin's pistol, and stood at the Frenchman's elbow, regarding the dead man's features with wide, fascinated eyes.

"Eh, what is it you do say—Phipps?" de Grandin shot back.

"Yes. His family's lived in Woolwich since I don't know when. He was always a wild sort of chap—never able to keep any kind of employment or stick to anything for long. A little while ago, though, he seemed to be making lots of money, and his funds seemed to increase all the time. We all thought he was playing the stock market. He married Marcia Hopkins last year, and they built a lovely home over by Andover. But——"

"'But,' indeed, *Mademoiselle*," de Grandin cut in. "One wonders. Me, I greatly suspect the stock in which this one dealt was of the kind found in the cellars of gentlemen who preach the virtues of prohibition in public

and entertain themselves and their friends with cocktails in private. This ancient, fear-ridden house with its reputation of being haunted—the warning you and your unencouraged escort received when you approached it in the storm—this childish masquerade to frighten off intruders, they point to——

"Down, my friends! *Ventre à terre!* Keep away from the light!"

Matching his own command with performance, he flattened himself to the floor, and the rest of us followed instant suit.

Nor were we a second too quick. The thunderous roar of sawed-off shotguns resounded even as we dropped, and a shower of slugs whistled murderously over us.

The Frenchman's little pistol barked shrewish rejoinder to the fusillade, and Edwin Phipps, revolver in hand, wriggled forward across the floor, firing rapidly. Somebody screamed hoarsely in the dark, and the sound of rending wood was followed by a hurtling body falling to the hall floor with a sickening thud. For a moment the silence succeeding the mêlée was oppressive; then a whimper from the fallen man before us and a piteous groan from the balcony above told us the battle was ended, all casualties being on the other side.

By the light of our electric torches we examined our late foemen. The fallen man had a shattered tibia, the result of a lucky shot from Phipps's revolver, and a broken collar-bone, sustained when he crashed through the rotting balcony rail and fell breast forward to the stone floor of the hall. The man on the balcony was shot through the left shoulder and the thigh, neither wound being serious, but both bleeding profusely.

For a few moments, with improvised bandages and splints, de Grandin and I worked feverishly. We were rigging a crude Spanish windlass to stanch the wound in our late enemy's leg when Marguerite DuPont's shrill hail came:

"Fire! The house is burning!"

"My God!" our patient cried hoarsely. "Get us out o' here, quick. It's th' stills. There's five hundred gallon o' raw liquor downstairs in th' cellar an' two hundred gallon o' mash. Quick, f'r th' love o' God, before th' place blows up!"

No second warning was necessary. We piled the wounded men on cots and rushed them from the house, found the high-powered car concealed in the crumbling woodshed, and set the motor going. Five minutes later, directed by Marguerite, I piloted the machine along the road to Woolwich.

Our departure was none too soon. Dry as tinder, the old house burned like lighted paraffin, and before we had traveled half a mile along the concrete country road, there came a dull, reverberating roar like the eruption of a miniature volcano, and showers of sparks and burning brands shot into the rain-washed December night.

"*Eh bien,*" de Grandin commented, "it seems our task is somewhat delayed by this night's business."

"How's that?" I asked, glancing momentarily from the road.

"I mean we must wait till the embers of that wicked old house have cooled—a week, perhaps—then we proceed to draw the fires of an ancient grudge," was his enigmatical retort.

THE tale the wounded bootleggers told the police surgeon to whose care we turned them over was not an unusual one. Claude Phipps, ne'er-do-well descendant of the proud old family, had grown to manhood with all the vices and few, if any, of the virtues of his ancestors. Disinclination to work, a passion for spending all the money he could acquire by whatever dubious means came to hand, and a feeling of superiority,

ground in him by the futile boastings of his impoverished and snobbish parents, had made him something of a town character, shunned by his own class, granted a sort of grudging welcome by the petty criminals, race touts and cheap gamblers with whom he consorted. Like many others of his kind, prohibition had provided him with the means of living without appreciable labor. Beginning as lieutenant to a professional rum-runner, he graduated to captaincy of his own small crew, finally adopted the expedient of manufacturing his stock in trade in preference to the more hazardous course of running it in from Canada or the sea.

Knowledge of the legends surrounding the old house belonging to the other branch of his family, and the fact that the place had been unoccupied for years, provided him a cheap and relatively safe headquarters for his operations. In the cellar of the old homestead he set up a still, and with the assistance of two companions proceeded to engage in the preparation of liquor of sorts on a wholesale scale. Once or twice natives familiar with the old house had attempted half-hearted investigation of the strange lights and sounds observed there after dark, but the ghost outfit with which the unbidden tenants had provided themselves, accompanied by appropriately eery shrieks and demoniacal laughter, had frightened away the amateur detectives, and Claude and his gang were left in undisputed possession of the place.

Recently, however, more serious opposition had developed, for Salvatore Giolotti, local overlord of the bootlegging industry, had delivered an ultimatum. Claude must either suspend opposition or join forces with him. It was with the threats of the larger organization still fresh in their minds that Claude and his henchmen had discovered Marguerite and her escort apparently reconnoitering the approaches to the house, and fired on them.

The two survivors were for shooting us at once when our presence was discovered, for they had no doubt we were the advance guard of Giolotti's army of occupation, but Claude prevailed on them to let him try his spectral masquerade before resorting to firearms.

"U'm," de Grandin muttered thoughtfully as the wounded youth concluded his recital. "And this Monsieur Claude, your leader, he lived in Andover, did he not? Will you be good enough to furnish his address?"

As soon as our business with the officers was concluded, de Grandin rushed us from the station house and summoned a taxicab. "To 823 Founders' Road," he commanded when we were ensconced in the vehicle.

A light burned brightly in the upper front room of the pretty little suburban villa before which the taximan deposited us half an hour later, and through a rear window there showed another gleam of lamplight. A large closed car was parked at the curb, and as we passed it I noticed it bore the device of Mercury's caduceus beside its license plate, thus proclaiming its owner a member of the medical fraternity.

No answer came to de Grandin's sharp ring at the doorbell, and he gave a second imperative summons before a light, quick step sounded beyond the white-enameled panels. A pleasant-faced woman in hospital white opened the door and regarded us with a half-welcoming, half-inquiring smile. "Yes?" she asked.

"Madame Phipps—she is here? She may be seen?" de Grandin asked, and for once his self-assurance seemed to have deserted him.

The nurse laughed outright. "She's here," she answered, "but I don't

think you can see her just now. She had a little son two hours ago."

"*Sacré nom! Le sort*—the curse—it still holds!" the little Frenchman exclaimed. "I knew it, I was certain, I was sure; I was positive we should find this, my friends, but I had to prove it! Consider: Monsieur Claude, the worthless, I shot him in self-defense two hours ago; he died with blood upon his mouth. Almost in that same instant his wife became a mother! This is no business of the monkey with which we deal, *mes amis; mille nons;* it is grave, it is earnest. But certainly." He nodded his head solemnly.

"Nonsense!" I broke in. "It was a coincidence; nothing more."

"You may have right, my friend," de Grandin acceded somberly, "but men have died for less reason than such coincidences as this, and unless we can——"

"Can what?" I prompted as we turned and retraced our steps toward the waiting taxi.

"No matter," he answered shortly. "Hereafter we stand in need of deeds, not words, my friend."

IT WAS almost a week before the fire-ravaged ruins of the old house had cooled sufficiently to permit us to rummage among charred timbers and fallen bricks. The great central chimney stood like the lone survivor of a burned forest amid the blackened wreckage. The heat-blasted stone paving of the hall, supported by the heavy arches of the vaulted cellar, remained intact, as did the mighty fireplace with its arch of field-stones; otherwise the house was but a rubble of fallen brick and burned joists.

The little Frenchman had been busily engaged during the intervening days, making visits here and there, interviewing this one and that, accumulating stray bits of information from any source which offered, particularly interviewing the Italian priest who served the Catholic parish within the confines of which the ancient house stood.

Beginning with a call of perfunctory politeness to inquire concerning her wound, Edwin Phipps had spent more and more time in Marguerite DuPont's company. What they talked of as they sat before the pleasant open fire of her home while he assisted her with the tea things, lighted her cigarettes and otherwise made his two hale hands do duty for her injured member I do not know, but that their brief acquaintanceship was ripening into something stronger was evident from the glances and covert smiles exchanged—silent messages more eloquent than words, intended to deceive the other members of the party, but easily read as hornbook type.

I was not greatly surprized when Edwin drove Marguerite up to the site of the old house late in the forenoon of the day appointed by de Grandin for "*la grande expérience.*"

Beside the little Frenchman, his stole adjusted on his shoulders, service book ready and open, stood Father Rizzio of the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Near the clergyman, viewing the scene with a mixture of professional dignity and wondering expectation, stood Ricardo Paulo, sexton of the church and undertaker to the congregation, and near him rested an open casket, a handsome bronze-plated product of the factories of Boyertown, Pennsylvania, the white silk of its tufted interior shining pallidly in the bright December sunshine.

From a roll of burlap de Grandin produced a short, strong crowbar, inserted its wedge-end between the slate hearthstone and the pavement of the hall and threw his weight upon the lever. "Quick, Friend Trowbridge, lend me your aid," he panted, bearing heavily against the bar; "*hélas,* I lack the bulk to budge it!"

I joined him, bore down upon the crowbar, and wrenched the iron side-

(Continued on page 136)

THE BIRD-PEOPLE

BY OTIS ADELBERT KLINE

IT WAS not without considerable difficulty that I persuaded Lieutenant Alan Morley to allow me to place his story before the public. His is a sensitive and retiring nature, and the ridicule which he feels positive will follow the disclosure of such amazing adventures will be hard for him to bear. However, as it is a record of what happened to the *Lauritania*, her passengers and crew, after her strange disappearance off Cape Clear in 1917, I feel that it should be given wide publicity. Whether or not it is universally accepted, which I am sure will not be the case, is a matter of small concern to me. I have seen and heard evidence that convinces me, and will have done my duty when I have made it the property of the public.

Most of us remember the striking newspaper reports of the strange disappearance of the *Lauritania*, twelve years ago. On the evening of October 14th she had steamed out of Liverpool under cover of darkness in order to avoid lurking German submarines.

"The bird still advanced, but there was no time to reload."

Her apparent destination, because of the certainty that spies would be watching and reporting, was New York City, but her real destination, as afterward disclosed, was Brest. The passengers who had gone aboard her in civilian clothing were British soldiers and nurses, bound for the Western Front of the great World War.

The *Lauritania* was convoyed by two destroyers, and it is to the report of the captain of one of these destroyers, filed with the British Admiralty, that I now have reference. In brief, he stated that the three ships had reached a point in the vicinity of 51° north latitude and 9° west longitude, just off Cape Clear, about two o'clock the morning of the 15th, when the disappearance occurred. Running without lights, the three boats kept in constant touch by wireless, but a heavy fog descended shortly before two o'clock, and at two all wireless communication from the *Lauritania* ceased.

Alarmed by this, the captain of the destroyer turned on his searchlights, sounded his fog-horn at intervals, and

began a search for the liner. By two-fifteen a. m. the fog had lifted and the two destroyers arrived simultaneously at the spot where the *Lauritania* had last been heard from. Although they circled the spot and hunted in the vicinity the rest of that night and all next day, and for two days thereafter, they found no trace of the missing boat, nor of any wreckage which might reasonably have been supposed to appear in case the boat had been torpedoed and sunk. In the records of the Admiralty, it appears that a subsequent examination of the sea bottom was made in the vicinity, but with a negative result. The *Lauritania* had disappeared as completely and mysteriously as if she had suddenly been transported to another planet.

So much for the Admiralty records.

To my passion for deep-sea fishing may be ascribed the reason for my chance meeting with Lieutenant Alan Morley and the confidence he has since placed in me. I put out from Chinde one bright morning in a small sailing vessel with a crew of one black man, to try my luck in the Mozambique Channel. A sudden storm arose, making it imperative that we lower sail, and blew us far off shore.

When the fury of the tempest had subsided, night was coming on.

We sighted a tiny islet not more than a half-mile distant, and sailed toward it. Despite the fact that my ebon crew assured me there were no inhabited islets in this vicinity, I saw a figure moving on the shore as we approached.

Scarcely had we beached our light craft when a ragged, bearded person ran toward us, shouting incoherently and dancing like a wild man. Ludicrous and unkempt as he appeared at the moment, he is the hero of a series of adventures which, so far as I am aware, transcend any previous human experience.

How we spent the night with him on the island, regaled with fruit and roasted shell-fish, and made our way to the mainland on the following day, need not be recorded here.

Suffice to say that when shaved and clothed, the marooned man was obviously young, handsome, and every inch a gentleman. I spent more than a week in his company before I thought it prudent, over an evening glass of Scotch and soda, to ask him about a package which he always carried with him, and which he had brought, wrapped in fiber cloth which he had woven from hibiscus bast, when we left the island.

"If you have something of value in that package, Lieutenant," I said, "don't you think it would be wise to place it in a bank vault? There are many shady characters on this coast, and if it contains pearls, for instance, we may find you some morning with a knife in your back and the package missing."

"It contains nothing of value to anyone but me, my friend."

"But are you sure? Things that are of value to one man are usually of equal value to many others."

"Judge, then, for yourself," he replied, handing me the package.

I hesitated, looking at the shiny oil-skin wrapper which he had lately provided.

"Unwrap it," he said.

Upon opening the package I found that it contained a notebook in which a number of penciled entries had been made. It was stained, dog-eared, and discolored, but still legible.

"Read," said the lieutenant, "and then call me mad if you will. I must tell someone, sometime, I suppose."

I read, spellbound, far into the night, the lieutenant puffing his pipe in a great leather chair beside me. It is from that dog-eared notebook that I have taken the following story, for the sake of brevity omitting certain

details which will probably not be of interest to the public at large.

Here is the story. . . .

WE WERE steaming down the coast of Ireland without lights, keeping in touch by wireless with the two destroyers that were to guard us from submarine attack, when a heavy fog suddenly descended. I was in the wireless room at the time, and the operator, suddenly throwing off his head-phones, informed me that the instrument had gone dead. A cry from the helmsman's cabin, just ahead, sent me running. When I came up beside him, he shouted: "Do you see what I see, sir?" and pointed to the ship's compass. It was whirling so rapidly that the face appeared as a blur. I was both startled and puzzled, though not alarmed.

It was when I again stepped outside the cabin that the situation grew alarming. There was a lurid red glow tinting the surrounding fog and lighting up the deck like a flash from an opened fire-door. But this was not all. The ship's motion through the water was being retarded by some unknown agency! There was no sudden shock—just a slow retardation, but it was sufficient to make our oil-burning engines labor and vibrate with an unusual amount of noise. This noise, however, was drowned in a moment by a sputtering, crackling sound which came from overhead. At the same instant, three brilliant shafts of light, one green, one red, and one violet in hue, cut through the fog, trained on us as from a distant and extremely tall lighthouse or a far-off airship. Where the three rays combined to flood our ship with light the result was dazzling white brilliance that exceeded the glare of the noonday sun, and I noticed that our masts, funnels, rigging and sails were giving off millions of multicolored sparks and rays.

We had anti-aircraft guns aboard, and I heard the captain order them made ready for action. Convinced that we were being attacked by Zeppelins with some new and unspeakably fiendish device, I drew my Colt service forty-five and hurried up to the boat deck to join in the fray. Before I reached it, however, a strange thing happened. The huge bulk of the *Lauritania* rose from the water—engines racing and screws roaring like airplane propellers—dimly audible above the crackling of the ship, which had apparently become radio-active under the influence of the three lights.

For a moment I caught a glimpse of the waves beneath us, reflecting the brilliant sheen of light; then they disappeared, and with them, the ship I was standing on, and everything, in fact, except the three colored rays.

Believing that I had suddenly gone blind, I held my right hand before my eyes. I could not see it. With my left hand I grasped the rail. This I could feel, but could not see. Presently I could no longer even feel the rail! All sounds ceased. It was as if I were without body or weight in a soundless void, lighted by the three converging rays, which alone remained visible.

By a supreme effort of will, I managed to retain consciousness and to watch the three amazing rays. It seemed to me that their angles of convergence were slowly growing less acute, and from this I deduced that either we were approaching their source, or their source was approaching us.

I do not know how long it was that I stood thus, presumably grasping the rail which I could neither see nor feel—it may have been a few seconds, or it may have been many hours. I had lost all sense of time. At any rate, things presently began to grow visible once more. At first I saw the dim outlines of the ship's foremast and rigging. Then the decks and railings and the people on them came into view. The red of our forward smoke-

stack loomed beside me, and above it I could see the painted black diamond on a white background which was the trademark of our company.

A feeling of weakness, which I could not shake off, assailed me. Others, I observed, had fared worse than I, a few staggering as if drunk or drugged, but most of them lying or groveling on the decks.

Accompanying the visual perceptions were the auditory. I could hear the moans of men, the shrieks and sobbing of frightened women. I could again feel the rail tightly gripped in my hand—the solid metal steps beneath my feet.

Descending the rest of the way to the boat deck, I encountered Captain Winslow. He reeled as if intoxicated, and I placed my hand on his arm to steady him.

"If you know what has happened to us, Lieutenant, in God's name tell me!" he cried.

"Must be some new electrical device of the Germans, sir," I replied, "but too deep for my comprehension."

While I was speaking the captain took out his binoculars and focused them on the source of the rays. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation of surprize and wonder and pushed them into my hands.

"Look, Lieutenant," he cried. "A super-Zeppelin!"

I looked, and saw something which appeared anything but a Zeppelin to me. It was an enormous globe, shining with a silvery white light like that of the moon, except at the polar extremities which appeared black, and protruded. The three light rays appeared to be coming through portholes in the immense sphere.

"If that is a Zeppelin, sir, or bears any relation to one," I said, "then I have never seen a German airship."

"I guess you're right, Lieutenant. It's something else—but what? The thing seems to be drawing us through the air without contact—sort of magnetic attraction, I suppose."

"Looks that way, sir. Perhaps the globe acts as a huge electro-magnet, and the projecting black poles are really magnetic poles. Our ship, being principally steel, would be drawn along the magnetic lines of force like a bar of iron. On the other hand, it may not be magnetism at all. Perhaps the light rays are performing the work of levitation and propulsion, applying laws unknown to, and even unsuspected by us."

"Perhaps, but let us examine some evidence of a more simple nature. What country, for instance, would you say we are sailing over just at present?"

THE captain had been looking over the rail while I had continued to stare at the strange machine that had us in its power. I now followed the direction of his gaze, then rushed to the rail, marveling meanwhile at the extraordinary landscape which spread before my eyes, weirdly lighted by the rays reflected from our ship. The ground immediately beneath us was gently rolling prairie, covered with a velvety carpet of reddish-brown vegetation. Browsing on this rich pasturage were large herds of odd-looking creatures. The adults were as large as draft-horses, and more nearly resembled the ornithorhynchus than any earthly creature I can think of, being rotund of figure and having huge, flat, duck-like bills. Unlike the ornithorhynchus, however, they had long, arching necks, and legs as long as those of camels. The nearest herd was about five hundred feet below me, and from that distance I judged that the creatures were quite hairless and without even rudimentary tails. I noticed several young ones, the smallest of which was about two and a half feet in length. One of these suckled from mammæ, situated just behind the forelegs of the mother instead of

beneath the hind legs as in earthly cattle and horses.

Each herd, it appeared, had an attendant, a man-like creature that walked on two legs and appeared to be covered with brown feathers with the exception of the face, which was quite naked and rather bestial-looking in the individual nearest me. I noticed, too, that there grew from the head of this quasi-human creature a crest of long, bright-hued feathers, slightly resembling the feather crown of an Indian chief, but instead of ending in a tail at the back, following the ridges of the shoulders and the back of each arm and ending in a point of short feathers at the wrist, forming rudimentary wings. The marking of these feathers was quite similar to that of the tail feathers of a peacock. This brilliant crest was raised and lowered at will, like the crest of a jay or a muscovy duck.

The silvery sheen of a number of lakes broke the reddish-brown of the landscape, and I saw that a number of the duck-billed creatures were enjoying baths in them, sporting about like seals at play, diving beneath the surface, and remaining for considerable intervals, to emerge presently, apparently much refreshed, and betake themselves again to the pasturage.

I was looking over the port side of the vessel at the time, and as my eyes took in a more distant portion of the landscape I saw that we were approaching an exceedingly rugged land formation. In the distance it looked like a group of sharp, stony peaks with sheer, precipitous sides, separated by immensely deep gorges or canyons, and I was reaching for my binoculars to satisfy my curiosity on this point when the captain plucked at my sleeve.

"What's the matter, Lieutenant? Dazed?" he asked.

"I don't think so, sir."

"Well, then, I asked you a question. What country are we sailing over? Have you any idea?"

"Not the slightest."

"But you have a theory or something. You must have."

"About the only theory I can advance at present, sir, is a negative one. My opinion is that we are not flying over the earth."

"You think we have been transported to some other planet?"

"So it seems."

"Then take a look at the sky. Is that Mars directly overhead, or isn't it?"

"It may be Mars, although it's a trifle off color. Looks almost purple."

"What about the planet that appears to be setting at our right?"

"Looks a little like Jupiter, except for the violet tinge to the light it gives off."

"Use your binoculars. I've used mine."

I hastily adjusted my powerful glasses and looked at the planet in question. It was Jupiter, without a doubt, for I saw four of his moons, one on the left, and three on the right, just as they should have been at the time.

"It's Jupiter, all right," I said.

"And now, what about the planet that appears to be rising at our left?"

"Venus, without a doubt," I said, "although it has an unusual bluish cast."

"And the increasing light on the horizon beneath her tells us that the sun will rise in a very few minutes. So where are we?"

"Not far from the earth," I said. "Perhaps we are on the moon."

"Have you noticed any change in the pull of gravity?"

"None whatever."

"You would, Lieutenant, on the moon."

"To be sure."

"Then our astronomical observations tell us we are on or near the earth, while common sense tells us

that the ground beneath us is not the earth. That city we are approaching, for example, bears only a very slight resemblance to anything I have ever seen or heard of on our planet."

I had been so absorbed in our conversation that I had forgotten to watch the strange land over which we were passing. Now, looking over the rail once more, I saw that we were very close to the rugged land formation which I had previously noticed. The higher points were covered with buildings of exceedingly strange design. Most of them were hexagonal in form, and the tallest were higher than any modern skyscraper. Although they were of various heights and widths, and some quite irregular in outline, all agreed in one particular—they were invariably crowned by glistening domes that reflected the rays of the morning sun with great brilliance.

The place was inhabited, for I saw figures moving about, although they were still too far away for me to judge what they were like. By bringing my binoculars into play, however, I managed to see one group quite clearly, even to the expressions on their faces. They seemed to be regarding our ship with as much astonishment as I felt at sight of them. They were human beings, I thought, but *such* beings. All were stark naked and their skins gleamed a golden yellow in the morning sunlight. They seemed to be wearing multi-hued feather crowns which followed the ridges of the shoulders and the back of each arm, ending in a point of short feathers half-way between shoulder and elbow. I plainly made out ten females and four males, standing on the edge of a deep canyon, the top of which was covered with dark red vegetation, and a fifth male looking at us through an instrument which resembled a telescope.

A short distance from them, a huge stream, wider than the Niagara, plunged dizzily to the bottom of the canyon, which must have been at least five hundred feet deep. Just above the falls was a lake, nearly oval in form, about a half-mile across at its widest point and perhaps a mile in length. This lake was surrounded by the queer buildings I have described, rising in disparate confusion like a primordial colony of thallophytic growths on its rocky shore-line.

In the center of this lake was an island, also covered with the same type of structures except at one end. This was occupied by three huge towers twice as tall as any of the near-by buildings. The towers supported an immense ring which seemed to be made of shiny brown metal. The globe which held us in its power by means of the strange rays was directly above this ring, and settling toward it.

UP UNTIL this time I had been so preoccupied with the unusual events and sights that I had paid small heed to my fellow beings aboard ship. Now, upon glancing to the right and left, I saw that the port rails of our four decks were lined with passengers and crew alike, all apparently unhurt, and watching the strange city we were approaching with an interest that appeared equal to my own. As the throb of our engines had ceased, I judged that Andy MacPherson, our chief engineer, had thriftily shut them off to save fuel, without waiting for orders.

When it appeared that we were to be lowered into the lake, the captain ordered all members of the crew to their posts. Then Major Pickering, who was in command of the troops we had on board, walked up to where the captain and I were standing.

"Jolly old go, what?" he said, apparently addressing both of us.

The captain grunted an affirmative and I nodded.

"What d'you think the blighters have planned for us?" he continued.

"I haven't the slightest idea," confessed the captain.

"Nor I, but they have the look of savages to me—cannibals, I'll warrant. I've five hundred fighting Tommies, you know, and plenty of arms and ammunition. If they're planning to do us in it might be well to be prepared."

"They probably have weapons that will make your rifles about as effective as pea-shooters against machine-guns, Major," replied the captain. "However, it may be a good plan to arm your men if you're sure you can keep them in hand."

"We're fighting men, all of us," said the major, "and if we're headed for kingdom come we prefer to shoot our way."

"They're lowering us toward the water now," cried the captain, excitedly. "Arm your men, but keep them below deck for the present." He swung on me. "Order all the women to stay within their cabins."

While the major sang out orders to his men, I hurried off to see that the captain's instructions were carried out.

On reaching the fourth deck I saw that the crews of our six submarine guns, two forward, two amidships, and two aft, were ready for action. Major Pickering was standing beside one of the forward hatches, and smiled grimly as I passed. Behind him in the hatchway, and on the deck below, his Tommies were hastily donning uniforms and getting in line for the issuance of weapons and ammunition.

My mission completed, I returned to the boat deck. I found that the captain had quitted it, and on going forward, saw him on the bridge conversing with Reynolds, the officer of the deck. Our anti-aircraft guns were manned, their crews standing by for orders. Everything that could be done in the way of preparedness had been done; yet how futile, after all, must be any offensive move we could possibly make against an enemy who could, at will, dissolve our ship, our weapons, our very bodies into apparent nothingness.

I went to my cabin for an extra forty-five, notwithstanding, and after belting it about me and donning a light raincoat in order that my weapons might not be conspicuous, mounted to the quarter-deck for a good view of what was taking place about us, as well as to be within easy reach of the captain's call.

We were now being carried slowly across the lake, our keel perhaps fifty feet above the water, and our apparent destination a dock in the lee of the island I have previously mentioned. The three rays which were trained on us were still visible, despite the brilliant light of the morning sun.

The entire shore was lined with the yellow people, and the docks and buildings on the island were dotted with them. Moored at the docks were a number of globes, smaller than the one which held us captive, but having, in addition to the portholes, rows of keel-like ridges which traversed the spheres at right angles to their equators and narrowed down to mere points just before they reached the black poles. There were several different sizes, but even the largest was not more than a fourth as big as our aerial captor.

Hearing a splashing sound behind me, I turned, then ran to the starboard rail and gazed in amazement. One of the queer water-vehicles that I had just noticed had apparently left the shore and was rolling toward us at a terrific rate of speed over the surface of the water, its two poles standing out horizontally like the axles of a wheel. I immediately thought I understood the purpose of the keel-like ridges which propelled the globular boat so rapidly over the water, but I had not seen all. When it drew near,

its pilot evidently mistrusted the clearance between our keel and the surface, for the thing suddenly stood up on one pole, and dived, still rotating in the same direction. I noticed, however, that the rudders had been shifted, turned almost at right angles to the first position, so the blades had given the globe the same action as that of a screw being driven into a board.

In less than five seconds the vehicle popped out of the water on our port side, turned over on its belt, shifted its blades, and rolled quickly to the dock. I have seen the fastest hydroplanes in the world, but I have never seen anything in terrestrial waters that even approached the speed at which this remarkable water-ball traveled.

A moment more, and we were being lowered gently, almost imperceptibly, into the water beside the dock. We were very close to the strange yellow people now—not more than fifty feet from the nearest group—and I could see that they were not only entirely without a trace of hair, but that the feathers which I had previously observed actually *grew* from their heads, shoulders and arms. The males, I observed, had brilliant-hued feather crowns of all imaginable colors and combinations, but those of the females were very plain, most of them brown, black, or gray.

It was strange to see them elevating and lowering these crests like birds, while many of them talked excitedly.

The sound of their voices, which was now quite distinct, was strangely like that of a flock of birds, although it varied from low, harsh, rasping tones like those of wild ducks to high, shrill, and often flute-like soprano notes as pleasing as those of the lark or the red-wing.

ALMOST before I was aware of it our ship was floating on the surface of the lake. Then the rays from the huge globe were suddenly shut off and we glided slowly toward the dock.

Grappling hooks, padded with some soft material and nearly soundless, were thrown aboard us and we were drawn against the dock, which was also padded, making fenders unnecessary.

None of the queer bird-people attempted to come on board, and so far as I could tell, none of the people near us was armed. They had nothing in their hands, and as they wore no clothing it was obvious that they carried no weapons concealed about them, unless, indeed, these were hidden in the feather crowns. There was, however, a row of them farther back whose bearing seemed military, and who carried what appeared to be weapons of some sort, although I could not even guess their use. The things they held in their hands were about two feet in length, and curved out to muzzles at each end which were shaped like the tops of champagne glasses, easily eight or nine inches in diameter. In addition, each man wore a belt to which was fastened a tube or pipe about three feet in length.

Meanwhile, the giant globe which had carried us into this strange world circled lazily overhead for a moment, then made for the three towers supporting the huge metal ring which I have previously described. On reaching a point above the ring it righted itself—that is, it moved its two poles into a perpendicular position—and settled slowly until it came to rest in the metallic ring. Here, then, was an airdrome built especially for the remarkable airship of the bird-people.

A round door in the globe suddenly swung open, and a short, pot-bellied bird-man with a purple feather crown stepped out and stood on the ring. His appearance was the signal for a demonstration from the crowd which I took to be cheering, from its slight resemblance to the manner in which a terrestrial crowd shows its pleasure.

It consisted of raising all the crests, elevating all hands, and emitting a deafening medley of shrill, whistling notes of marked bird-like quality.

After elevating his own feather crest three times and smiling, the pot-bellied man, followed by two companions whose crests were mottled green and red, stepped into the nearest tower and disappeared from view. He emerged at the bottom a moment later, however, and still accompanied by the others, entered the door of a globe about fifteen feet in diameter, which had apparently been waiting for him. This globe, like those in the water, had points of resemblance to the one he had just quitted; that is, it had black poles, round portholes, and doors. There projected from each side of the equator, however, two rows of powerful-looking cleats which sank into the soft ground like those on heavy tractor wheels.

As soon as the door had closed behind them, the thing rolled toward us with incredible swiftness. The two lines of soldiers or police—I was convinced they were one or the other—opened a lane in the crowd for the strange land-vehicle, and it rolled straight down to the dock, where it came to a sudden stop.

Once more the door of the vehicle opened, and the pot-bellied man stepped out, followed by his two companions. Then, with the ponderous dignity of a New Amsterdam alderman, the rotund individual walked toward the ship, while the other two kept at a respectful distance behind him. When he had waddled to within twenty feet of our rail, he stopped and leisurely examined the ship. Presently his eyes met mine, and he smiled. I returned the smile, and he held up a pudgy hand, beckoning with a short, fat finger. It was plainly an invitation for me to come down.

I turned and called to the captain, who had been watching the whole affair from the bridge.

"Shall I go, sir?"

"If you wish, but remember, I do not order you to go."

I hurried down the ladders to the fourth deck, which was nearly level with the dock, ordered the gang-plank down, and then advanced to meet the important individual who had signified a desire for my presence, assuming as much dignity as I could muster. I felt, rather than saw, thousands of the bird-like eyes watching me, particularly those of the double line of guards between which I passed. I was instantly conscious of a feeling of embarrassment at being in a crowd of stark naked beings. Actually, I believe I could not have felt more embarrassed had I been stark naked myself in a well-dressed crowd.

The little pot-bellied man advanced, raised his purple feather-crest, and laid his right hand over my heart. As this appeared to be a form of salute, I raised my cap with my left hand and placed my right hand over his heart.

This appeared to please him, for he smiled and removed his hand from my chest, at the same time lowering his feather-crest. I followed suit by smiling, replacing my cap on my head, and removing my hand.

Then he turned and said something in a low voice to one of the two men who stood behind him. The two conversed very rapidly for a few moments, and the sound was so similar to that made by ducks which are about to be fed that the thought of Major Pickering's remark about cannibals came to me with unpleasant suddenness. While the two talked there came from the multitude a hushed twittering, punctuated from time to time with hoarse but subdued cries.

After a few moments of animated conversation with the two men who had followed him, the little fat man turned to me once more, took my arm, and indicated by a gesture that he wished to go on board our ship. As I

nodded and led him up the gangplank I noticed that two of the armed guards fell in just behind us. The two unarmed bird-men came next, and behind them six more guards.

WE HAD scarcely reached the deck when one of the soldiers, who had apparently just come up the ladder by himself, advanced toward us in a threatening manner. He lurched slightly, and his face showed the effect of heavy drinking, which surprized me exceedingly until I remembered that some of our people had been revived with brandy. Perhaps he had an abnormal taste for liquor and had obtained and emptied one of the flasks. At any rate he came up in front of us, holding his rifle with bayonet fixed in a menacing manner.

"'Op it, yellow-belly!" he shouted at the little pot-bellied man. "'Op it, you bloody sarvage, or hi'll put you through it, so 'elp me!"

That the man was crazed by the experiences he had just gone through, coupled with the liquor he had subsequently consumed, I felt positive, as we had come aboard quite peaceably, and no one else on the ship seemed to doubt the apparently amicable intentions of the squat leader of the bird-people. I leaped forward with the intention of disarming the poor fellow, but before I could reach him he swiftly melted, gun and all, before my eyes. Where he had been standing a moment before there was absolutely no sign that he had ever been.

Mystified, I turned and looked at the pot-bellied man, who was smiling as if slightly amused by something. Beside him stood one of the guards, holding the long tube which had previously dangled from his belt so that one end pointed to the spot where the soldier had been. He held it so for a moment longer, then let it drop once more to his side.

There came to me the sudden realization that one of my fellows had been murdered in some inexplicable manner, and with it a blind, unreasoning rage. Without stopping to think—for the soldier had, after all, been killed in defense of the rotund leader—I leaped at the grinning guard and swung a crashing blow to the point of his jaw which stretched him on the deck. The next moment I fully expected instant annihilation, for the tubes of three of the guards were pointed at me. They were lowered, however, at a signal from the pot-bellied man. Then he smiled once more, as if nothing had happened, took my arm and signified that he wished to be conducted about the ship. The guard I had struck was not attended by any of his fellows, but left where he lay, while another sprang forward to take his place. When we started off I saw that he was sitting up, holding his jaw with one hand, and frowning darkly.

I led our captor—for such he assuredly was—forward to where Major Pickering was standing at the head of his men. A file of them was lined up with rifles grounded, and all, including the commander, saluted as we approached. The bird-men replied to the salute by raising and lowering their feather crowns, and then the little fat man greeted the major just as he had greeted me.

I next took him up to the captain, who had remained on the bridge, and he was saluted in the same manner. Then our captor indicated by signs that he wished the captain and me to accompany him ashore. We were discussing the advisability of this when the sharp crack of a pistol was heard. It was followed by a continuous fusillade, mingled with shouts, screams, curses, and the peculiar bird-like cries of the yellow people.

I leaped for the ladder, but the pot-bellied man, with surprizing agility for one of his obesity, was ahead of me. He must have cleared the three

ladders to the fourth deck in less than a minute, I at his heels.

The first thing I saw was the yellow guard I had struck in the jaw, lying on his back with blood and brains oozing from a hole in his forehead. A score of his fellows were sprawled on the deck, apparently dead or badly wounded, another was draped over the gang-plank, and several more lay on the dock. The crowd of unarmed bird-people was scattering in every direction in wild confusion, but the guards had formed a single line across the pier and were evidently preparing to charge the ship. The British soldiers had deployed along the rail, from behind which they were firing with considerable effect, as attested by the gaps opened in the enemy line.

It was plain to be seen, however, that the contest was as unequal as if our people had been using bows and arrows and the enemy machine-guns, for the yellow guards were using their tubes with deadly accuracy, and with such rapidity that fully a hundred men melted and disappeared before my eyes in as many seconds. I caught a glimpse of Major Pickering, firing his automatic in the thick of the battle; then the enemy charged. They were met by a countercharge of soldiers that poured up from the middle hatchway, and a fight at close quarters ensued. I drew my forty-fives and hurried aft to join in the battle, but it ceased suddenly and unexpectedly. At a sharp command from the pot-bellied man, the attackers withdrew, leaving fully a hundred dead and wounded, and barely a dozen of our soldiers who had escaped their lethal tubes, above deck.

Whirling, I faced the inexplicable little leader of the bird-people, with blood in my eye, but he smiled placatingly and motioned me to put my guns away. At this moment Captain Winslow, followed by the two companions of the leader and his seven guards, came up behind him. The major, also, strolled toward us, coolly reloading his smoking automatic.

"Who started this fight, Major?" asked the captain.

"That shabby cannibal the lieutenant bowled over some time ago," he replied, indicating the body of the man whose jaw I had dislocated. "He got up after you had gone above, and came over to where the men were standing with the evident intention of wiping out the whole file with that damned tube of his. Got two men before I shot him through the head. That shot started the guards on shore, and naturally I wasn't going to let them kill my men without fighting back."

While this conversation was going on the little pot-bellied man was watching and listening. Evidently he understood, from the major's gestures, something of what had taken place. At any rate he smiled, nodded, and then held a short consultation with his two unarmed companions. Presently he turned to us, and once more signified that the captain and I were to accompany him ashore.

"We'll have to talk him out of that idea, Lieutenant," the captain said to me. "After what has just happened one of us should remain on board."

"Perhaps he'll take me alone," I said. "I'll try him."

As best I could, I conveyed this idea to our captor by signs. Evidently he comprehended my meaning, for he held up two fingers and then pointed to the shore with a rather imperious gesture.

"Maybe the blighter will let me go in your place," said the major. "I don't mind going, and my officers can look after the men."

Once more I made representations to the bird-man, pointing to the major and myself, then to the shore.

To my surprize he smiled his assent, and we promptly went ashore. The yellow people, who had scattered for covering during the conflict, were

coming out of the buildings once more, and eyeing the major and me with unconcealed curiosity. The guards calmly set about the business of removing their dead and wounded without the slightest show of animosity.

After climbing a bank covered with short, thick grass, springy and pleasant to tread upon, we entered an arched doorway in the base of one of the tall buildings. We passed thence through a dimly lighted corridor, and stepped into a cylindrical elevator cage, the shaft of which was built in such a manner as to project beyond the outer wall of the building. I had previously noticed these shafts on most of the other buildings, but had not, until now, surmised their purpose.

The elevator shot swiftly upward, controlled in some manner that was invisible to me, and stopped suddenly when we had traveled perhaps a hundred feet. A door slid open, and we stepped into another corridor, patrolled by two guards, armed with the tube and double-funnel contrivances I have previously described. They saluted our three conductors with their feather crests, and the salute was returned. Various arched doors led off from the corridor, and the pot-bellied man threw one of these open. Then he motioned for Major Pickering to enter.

The major stepped in and I was about to follow him, but the little man held me back. Then one of the bird-men went in with the major and closed the door after him. Once more I was piloted along the hallway.

Presently the little man opened another door, and indicated that I was to enter. I stepped into what looked like a small gymnasium, followed by my two captors. After a short consultation with his taller campanion, the pot-bellied man went out, closing the door behind him.

I HAVE said the room looked like a small gymnasium. This was my initial impression of it, because the first thing that greeted my eyes on entering it was a trapeze suspended about four feet above the floor. It consisted of a cylindrical cross-bar about three feet long and four inches in diameter suspended on two twisted metal cables. About five feet from this trapeze was another just like it, hanging so that the bars of the two were parallel. The others were similarly suspended on the other side of the room. The place was bare of furniture, although there were a few cabinets built into the walls.

Through the open door of an adjoining room I saw what looked like a large circular basin about eight feet in diameter, filled with water. The floor was composed of a brown, hard substance that reminded me of asphalt, and the walls seemed to be of hard plaster, except where the cabinet doors appeared. These were constructed of something resembling burnished copper, as were the doors of all the rooms. Although it was as light as day in the rooms, I could see no lighting fixtures of any kind, nor were there any windows.

My new companion watched my examination of the room without comment. Then he smiled, pointed to one of the trapezes, and said:

"Tla ixtar."

As I had no idea what he meant, I merely smiled in return.

Then, to my surprise, he suddenly leaped up on the trapeze opposite the one he had just indicated and squatted, bird-like, on the bar with his arms crossed. Once again he pointed to the other trapeze and repeated his strange words. Gathering from all this that he wished me to perch myself on the other trapeze, I drew myself up to the bar, and, not to be outdone, attempted to assume the same posture as he. This came near being

disastrous, for I immediately lost my balance, and, had I not clutched a cable in the nick of time, would have fallen backward and probably alighted on my head. I thereupon gave it up for the time being and sat down naturally on the bar.

The bird-man, apparently more amazed at than amused by my clumsiness, next pointed to himself and said:

"Katodar Se."

I nodded. and pointing to myself, replied:

"Alan Morley."

He smiled, and tried to repeat my name, but only succeeded in saying something that sounded like "Alyan Norley."

Then he pointed to the trapeze on which he was seated and said:

"Ixta."

I pointed to mine, and replied:

"Trapeze."

We continued thus for several hours, pointing out and naming objects to each other. It was apparent to me that I had been sent here to learn the language of this strange people, as well as to impart mine, and I tried hard to do both. My teacher made many sounds that were exceedingly difficult for me to imitate, and I found that he had equal difficulty with many that I made. He seemed utterly unable to pronounce the letters, M, B, and P, invariably translating them as N, D, and T. The tones of this queer language, as I previously stated, had a peculiar, bird-like quality. The men's voices greatly resembled those of ducks when they spoke quietly, but rose and broke to tones like those of wild geese when they talked loudly or became excited. The silvery, flute-like treble tones I had heard in the crowd came exclusively from the women and children.

Presently the door opened, and two women entered, each bearing a tray of food on one hand and a tripod about five feet high in the other. A tripod was placed before each of us and a tray set thereon. Then the women left, and a guard closed the door once more.

There were four basin-like dishes on my tray. One contained a colorless liquid, one a liquid that was rather thick and light brown in color, another small cubes of what looked like meat, and the last, a dozen small brown cubes that appeared to be cakes.

Somewhat puzzled as to the proper table etiquette for disposing of the viands before me, I watched my preceptor. Dropping his hands to his sides, he leaned forward and inserted his mouth in the basin of colorless liquid. Then he lifted his head and tilted it backward in the manner of a chicken drinking water. Knowing without trying that it would be impossible for me to duplicate this remarkable performance without great danger to myself and my tray of food, I clung to my cable with one hand and raised the basin to my lips with the other. It contained a hot beverage which was sweetened and had evidently been brewed from a substance quite similar in flavor to caraway seeds. I next tasted the soup, for such it proved to be, and its flavor was remarkably like that of chicken broth.

My companion drank his soup in the same manner as his beverage, then craned his neck forward and began eating his food like a bird picking grain from the ground, his hands still hanging at his sides.

I used my fingers in lieu of a fork, and learned that the meat, which was tastily cooked and seasoned, had a flavor quite similar to that of wild duck. The flavor of the cakes is indescribable. I can think of no terrestrial food that resembles them. They were, however, delicious, and I was hungry enough to appreciate their strange but delightful taste.

Shortly after we finished our meal, the two women who had brought it removed the dishes, and we went on with our lessons.

After a lapse of about four hours

another meal was served. I had, by that time, talked myself hoarse, and was quite stiff from having been seated on the perch for so many hours. In the interim I had learned to speak and understand many words, among them the first two spoken to me by my teacher-pupil: *"Tla ixtar."* They meant "Be seated," or more literally, "Be perched."

After the dishes were removed, I got down from my perch to stretch my cramped limbs. For several minutes I paid no attention to my companion. When I did notice him, I saw to my amazement that he was balanced on the center of his perch with his hands crossed, fast asleep! I immediately walked to the door, and attempted to open it, but found it immovable. Then I tiptoed into the next room, where I had seen the huge basin of water. It was quite evidently a bathroom, with fixtures that suited the bird-like habits of its builders. The basin was undoubtedly the bathtub. As there was no door to this room, other than the one through which I had come, I went back to the first room once more. The bird-man was still sleeping on his perch, quite soundly, too, if one might judge by his heavy breathing.

Feeling tired and sleepy myself, I stretched out in a corner with my cap for a pillow and my raincoat for a coverlet, and was soon in the arms of Morpheus.

I was awakened, I know not how many hours later, by a tremendous splashing. When I got my eyes opened sufficiently, I saw that Katodar Se was bathing rather strenuously in the basin in the other room.

Presently he leaped out of the water, and turned a lever which evidently drained the tub. He then shook himself and preened his feathers, much like a waterfowl that has just come up from a swim.

As soon as the tub was empty he rinsed and refilled it, and I needed no second invitation to strip and take an exhilarating plunge in the clear, cold water.

Shortly after, breakfast was served by the two young females who had attended us the day before. It consisted of the same beverage we had previously had, fruit, the flavor of which I find myself unable to describe for lack of something with which to compare it, a number of small, sweet cakes, and some squares of meat that tasted like chicken.

As the two weeks that followed were practically a repetition of what I have just described, I will not weary my listeners with the details. Suffice to say that I remained in that room with Katodar Se for that length of time, doing nothing except eat, sleep, bathe and converse with my teacher-pupil. In that time I not only learned to speak the language of Alsitar—for this was the name of the strange world into which we had been drawn—but many other interesting things.

The city around us was called Axto, and was the capital of Axtosora, a nation of bird-men who had evolved directly from birds without the interposition of mammalian forebears. The females laid eggs, which were hatched by sunlight beneath the shining glass domes I had noticed on the buildings.

The completely feathered people I had seen on my first entry into this queer land were slaves of the Axtosorians—savages, still retaining the body feathers and rudimentary wings of their avian ancestors. Katodar Se assured me that there were several wild tribes of savages who could fly, and that there were also tribes of barbarians who covered their partly feathered bodies with clothing. All the civilized peoples, he said, had lost most of their body feathers while passing through this barbaric state, but had eventually abandoned clothing and the false and unnatural modesty which accompanies its use. When venturing into extremely cold regions, he said, his people anointed their skins with lotions which were ample pro-

tection against discomfort, and less cumbersome than garments.

The little pot-bellied man who had captured us was a scientist—the greatest on the planet Alsitar according to Katodar Se—and consequently the ruler of his own country, Axtosora, for the rulers of all civilized nations on Alsitar were their leading scientists. This important little man's name was Vangar De, the syllable "De" signifying first, or supreme ruler. The syllable "Se," after the name of my companion, signified that he was a scientist and therefore one of the elect, from the ranks of whom would eventually come the ruler who would succeed Vangar De. In this way, positions or occupations were signified among the leaders by syllables tacked on after their names. The common people, however, were not accorded this privilege, and had to be content with one name apiece.

As soon as I had mastered the language sufficiently, I questioned Katodar Se as to the manner in which we had been brought to Alsitar, and the reason for it.

Vangar De, he said, had always suspected that Alsitar was not alone in its trip around the sun, but that it was only one phase, one state of existence out of many that were bound together by the invisible magnetic sphere that surrounds the earth. This belief of Vangar De, he said, was shared by the leading scientists of a race of animal people who had white skins, and hair instead of feathers—who, in fact, greatly resembled myself in physical appearance if not in dress and action. Their greatest scientist, Tensan De, had been trying to invent a way to investigate the theory which was really a tradition with these animal people, whose ancestors were said to have come from a different state of existence at a time when the tail of a huge comet, violet in color, had brushed the earth. The fact that they were the only people of animal descent in Alsitar seemed to bear out this tradition. Vangar De, being greater than the great Tensan De of the animal people (according to his henchman) had been the first to invent a way of investigating the different planes of existence or, as Katodar Se expressed it, existence in different angles of vibration.

The electro-magnetic flying-globe was not his invention. These globes, in fact, were common everywhere among the civilized nations of Alsitar. They had been developed from the earlier types which had been used on land and in the water, and which I saw in use on the day the *Lauritania* was lowered into the lake.

I regret that I can not describe in detail the working-parts of this remarkable flying-globe, as the description alone would take up an entire volume; however, I will give you a general idea of how it works. The poles are actually the ends of a soft iron core that extends clear through the globe. The globe itself, although it appears to be made from white metal, is of heavy glass. Coiled inside of this glass are many layers of copper wire, wound in such a manner that when an electric current passes through them, terrific magnetic force is generated in the iron core. The terminals of the wires are attached to small but extremely powerful storage batteries, each of which loses but one thousandth of its charge in a year under the most trying conditions.

Inside the globe, at points midway between the core and the equator, are suspended the cages which hold the men. They are hung in such a manner that no matter which way the globe tips their floors are always parallel with the surface of the ground. In one of these cages—the cage of the pilot—is the intricate device which enables the globe to grasp and utilize the planetary magnetic lines of force, traveling in the upper or lower lines, or to the right or left by simple movements of the control levers; for no two lines or sets of lines are exactly alike, and a shifting of the magnetic lines in

the flying-globe will immediately change their affinities for the planetary lines. Knowing the nature of these lines at various heights and in different directions, the operator can travel at will, utilizing the terrific magnetic forces of the planet itself.

Katodar Se admitted that he was unable to explain the principles of the red, green and violet rays which had drawn our ship into his world. These, he said, were the secret of Vangar De, and him alone. The purpose of them, he said, was, however, no secret. The red ray could attract or repel objects swiftly or slowly in accordance with the will of the operator. The green ray could reduce, or entirely remove the gravitational pull of the earth on any matter it touched. The violet could change the *angle* as well as the rate of the vibrations of any matter on which it was flashed, transforming it to any other angle of vibration desired by the operator.

It was by means of these rays that Vangar De had been able to enter our world, seize the *Lauritania*, and convey it back to his own world. He had selected our ship, changed our angle of vibration to his own, reduced the gravitational pull on us, and drawn us to his city as easily as if we had been a feather in the path of a vacuum cleaner.

He also informed me that considerable rivalry existed between Vangar De of the bird-people and Tensan De of the animal people, and that the two races were constantly warring on each other.

Up to the end of the two-week period I have mentioned I had never seen a soul other than Katodar Se and the two young women who brought our meals, although my preceptor had left the room several times. Inquiries about Major Pickering and the people who had been left on the ship were always met by the reply: "You shall learn in good time." This monotonous answer was as irritating as it was unsatisfactory, and only served to intensify a persistently recurring intuitive feeling that all was not well with them.

It was a relief, therefore, when my preceptor informed me one morning that I was ready to be taken before Vangar De. After breakfast, our door was left open by the guard, and we descended the elevator.

WHEN we emerged in the open air, I was glad to see the *Lauritania* lying peacefully at the dock, just as I had left her, with her passengers and crew moving about on the decks as if nothing untoward had happened. I noticed that a number of our sailors as well as a great many of the British soldiers were strolling through the streets, some of them hob-nobbing with the natives by means of gestures with every appearance of friendliness and good will. This sight served to allay the fears I had entertained concerning their safety and, coupled with the benign influence of fresh air and sunlight, served to raise my spirits considerably.

After threading numerous narrow and crooked streets we came, at length, to the great Science Building, which was hexagonal like the others and crowned by a similar dome, but was at least twenty times greater in diameter than any I had previously seen. We entered through an immense arched doorway and after traversing a long hall lavishly decorated with brightly colored mural paintings which depicted the queer bird-people in various activities, as well as many queerer creatures, mostly bird-like in form, came to a long row of elevators, before each of which stood an armed guard. Katodar Se piloted me into one of these and the elevator shot up with such terrific speed that my vertebræ felt as if they had suddenly been crushed together. I caught one glimpse of my companion's face, which registered abject terror—then came a fearful shock and oblivion.

When I came to my senses I was lying in the bottom of the elevator

with a heavy weight across my chest, a throbbing pain in my head, and numerous sore spots on my body. Wiggling from beneath the weight, I saw that it was the body of Katodar Se, whether dead or alive I could not tell, but he appeared quite lifeless. His face and feathers were smeared with blood.

Seeing that the car had stopped directly in front of a door, I opened it, and entered a narrow hallway which seemed untenanted. I shouted as loudly as I could for help, but there was no answer. Then, still looking for help, I opened the first door I came to, and entered what appeared to be a laboratory, judging from the array of instruments, as well as liquids, powders and crystals in oddly shaped containers, which lined its walls and covered its tables. There was no one in the room. I tried another door and found a similar room, also unoccupied. The third room proved to be another laboratory, and I was about to close the door and pass on when I noticed something on the top of one of the tables that froze my blood with horror. It was the body of a man—a white man—spread-eagled with wrists and ankles bound to pegs in the corners of the table. The chest and abdomen had been split down the center and laid back on each side. The face, contorted with pain, I recognized as that of Jeeves, one of our machinist's mates, a little wild when on shore leave, but an excellent mechanic. As I turned from this sickening sight there came to me the sudden realization of the meaning of those bound wrists and ankles. Vivisection! It is not necessary so to bind a cadaver. Poor Jeeves had been ripped open alive!

I left that room in mingled fury and horror and hurriedly searched the other rooms, hoping to find a butcher that I might slay. All were untenanted. In some I found remains which convinced me that other members of our ship's company had been cut up, and these added fuel to the flames of my wrath.

Convinced that there was no way to leave the floor I was on except by the elevator, I returned to it and tried to find some way of operating the mechanism. It contained no visible projections except two small protuberances on the floor that looked like the heads of rivets. I was about to test the purpose of these when Katodar Se moved and uttered a feeble moan. An intuitive voice suddenly warned me that it would be fatal to let him know what I had discovered. I succeeded in softly closing the door before he opened his eyes. Then he sat up weakly and looked about him for a moment as if trying to recall where he was.

"Ah, I remember," he said, finally. "The button stuck—fault of some careless mechanic. We have had a narrow escape from death, Alyan Norley."

"But how are we going to get out of here?" I asked.

"Perhaps"—he pressed his hand to his bloody forehead for a moment—"perhaps I can fix it."

The floor of the elevator was composed of metal plates, through one of which the two protuberances projected. My companion removed this plate and examined the mechanisms to which the two buttons were connected. Presently he pried a small piece of metal from one of them.

"As I suspected," he muttered. "Criminal carelessness."

He replaced the plate, got to his feet, and stood on one of the buttons. We descended quite rapidly, but fortunately not nearly so rapidly as we had ascended.

Katodar Se brought the car to rest by raising his foot, and opened a door. Expecting to enter another narrow hallway, I was surprized to see a huge circular room crammed with the bird-people. A few were standing, but most of them were perched on trapezes such as I have previously de-

scribed, arranged in curved rows in front of a raised dais which was at the opposite end of the room. Balanced on a trapeze above the center of this dais was the little, pot-bellied Vangar De, scientist-ruler of Axtosora, backed by a semicircle of armed guards. Captain Winslow and Major Pickering stood together at one side of the dais, and I recognized the major's instructor on the other.

My tutor piloted me down the central aisle, straight to the dais, and the chatter and twitter of bird-like voices followed us. They were hushed, however, as we stopped in front of the ruler's perch.

Vangar De looked down at my companion and frowned.

"What is the meaning of this tardiness, Katodar Se?" he asked harshly. "There is blood on your face and feathers. Have you been attacked?"

My instructor contritely asked pardon for being late, and explained how it came about.

"Your excuse is a legitimate one, Katodar Se," said the ruler. Then he motioned to a man at my right, who promptly hopped off his perch and advanced to the foot of the dais. "Gidsal Se," he said, "learn the name of the mechanic who last repaired elevator thirteen, and see that he is entered in today's games."

Gidsal Se saluted and hastily withdrew.

Vangar De turned his sharp little eyes on me and smiled.

"Alyan Norley," he said, "we had intended questioning you this morning, but it has grown late and the people will be impatient for the opening of the games. We will therefore repair to the stadium, where you and your friends will be my guests for the day."

He then hopped down from his perch, and with every appearance of cordiality led the way through a door beside the dais, down a long hallway, and up a flight of steps. Almost before I was aware of it I found myself in a sort of box, which contained about a dozen perches, looking down into a large open-air arena surrounded by thousands of perches, most of which were already occupied by the bird-people.

Vangar De, having perched himself on the central bar, said: "*Tla ixtar,*" and the rest of us, including our tutors and the scientist-ruler's six armed guards, availed ourselves of the invitation and climbed to our perches. Captain Winslow took the perch next to me and I lost no time in telling him—speaking French so that the bird-men would not understand—just what I had seen on the top floor of the Science Building. Enraged and horrified though he was by my narrative, he managed to keep his features from betraying his feelings, though he gave his opinion of Vangar De and his subjects in quite forceful French. Then he told me that more than a dozen men had disappeared during my absence, but as they had, in nearly every case, been seen to carry on flirtations with the avian girls or women, it was assumed that they had deserted the ship of their own free wills. It was, of course, quite obvious from what I had seen, that the women, or most of them at least, had acted as lures for the scientists, who were apparently as interested in exploring our interiors as in studying our language, customs and culture.

Our conversation was interrupted by the sudden booming of a deep-voiced gong above our heads, and turning to Vangar De, I saw that he had his right hand extended, apparently as a signal for the opening of the games.

An answering gong sounded at the opposite end of the stadium; then a gate opened in the wall, and two men bounded into the arena. One was yellow with a blue and white feather crown, but the other was a white man

(Continued on page 139)

The Net of Shamlegh

by Lieutenant Edgar Gardiner

"Sikhandar Khan gave a convulsive shudder."

BILLY SINGLETON stood just inside the high gate of the Kashmir Serai and cursed—cursed as fluently and efficiently as any native, which is something that few of the ruling white race can do.

All his long trip up from the coast through the sweltering, enervating heat of the Punjab at summertime had been in vain; the time he could so ill spare and the expense account that would doubtless set the Kimball line's auditors about his ears again, all wasted — wasted because of the absence of one man. And because that man was a "black man" to boot—a native—well, that was the crowning insult.

A camel caravan creaked into the serai through the hot black night, coming almost magically under the blazing lights from out the velvety darkness. Perhaps this was he at last; perhaps Mahbub Ali, the Afghan, had but been delayed.

Apathetically he watched the ill-tempered, snapping beasts loom up out of that furnace of the night, laden with bundles and bales; almost mechanically his eyes swept the shrieking, cursing Balti camel-drivers' faces, looking for that of the Pathan horse-trader.

The caravan passed and melted into the steaming, milling crowd that filled the serai with a riot of color and a pandemonium of sound, and Singleton cursed his ill luck again.

This was the romance and the glamor of the East; this was the wonder and the mystery of the Orient, that had so thrilled him when he was first offered that odd position with the mighty Kimball steamship lines! In

his ignorance he had thought that as their confidential agent he would enjoy a palatial suite of offices with a retinue of native clerks and servants, perhaps in Singapore, or maybe Calcutta. Instead, he had been rushed hither and yon, now to see an obscure Hill raja in some out-of-the-way part of India; now up some sluggish, stinking river in the F. M. S. to confer with an equally obscure princelet whose dignity was in inverse ratio to his importance; or, like the present occasion, when the man he sought was not even so important, but merely a wandering horse-trader. What possible cargo could accrue from such an one?

No wonder Billy Singleton stood just within the high gate of the Kashmir serai under the blazing lights and cursed the dilatory, careless Afghan, root and branch, with the thoroughness of the native, even unto the fifth and sixth generation. For Billy was that rarest of all men, the English-born European who thoroughly understood the native mind, who "when he was in Rome did as the Romans" with a vengeance, even thinking native. Some there are who will tell you that there is no such animal; they will shout that even the country-born European, brought up by native servants, playing with native children, can not do that. But Billy could and did.

A great and absorbing game, this, matching wits with the white men from competing steamship lines, matching them with the infinite varied traits and habits of yellow, brown and black, and winning, too, far more often than he lost.

Billy never knew the esteem in which he was held by his employers; he never knew the regard in which the natives held him—those who were his friends, and they were legion; but he did know the hatred engendered in his enemies. For he made these last, even as any other who does things, whether in the Orient or the Occident. It is only the man who does nothing who makes no enemies in this world, and sometimes I am not so sure about even that.

Romance, mystery—bah! Dirt and delay, double-dealing and derision—*that* was the Orient, he thought, as he turned away for his hotel in the European quarter of Lahore.

He turned his back on the swarming, colorful hive that was the Kashmir Serai as evening passed into night, and threaded his way through the crowds of the narrow streets that reminded him of nothing so much as a heap of working maggots on a dunghill; he pushed his way absent-mindedly through the hot, crowded Motee Bazar where every race in the Asiatic world rubbed elbows — screaming, cursing, chaffing, dickering; past the Lahore Museum, the "Agaib-Gher" of the natives—the "wonder-house"; past the brick platform opposite where stood the great gun "Zam Zammeh," the "fire-breathing dragon." Tradition has it that whoso holds that holds the Punjab, and the great obsolete green-bronze piece of ordnance has ever been the coveted bit of the conqueror's loot.

It was too hot to hurry; besides, why hurry in this land where even Time stands still? Billy passed from the crowded, garish way into a narrow, tortuous alley that made more directly for his ultimate destination than the better-lighted, thronging thoroughfares. A foolhardy thing for any white man to do, especially when he is alone; but Billy was never one to think of risks. He came and went as he pleased, took appalling risks with the utmost sang-froid, and turned up debonair and smiling at the end. Billy passed into the narrow, tortuous alley and met his Kismet.

HALF-WAY down that dark way his inattentive ears heard the thud of blows on flesh, caught the whisper of a voice begging for mercy — a

child's voice—or a woman's. Billy stopped. A moment or two he listened in indecision; his reason told him not to interfere—no native would, even had that beating occurred in the open street instead of behind the high wall. Native or white, either knew better than to interfere openly with other's private affairs in this swarming land of vice and crime and intrigue.

"*Chûp,*" ordered a gruff voice; "*Chûp*—be still—or I break thy head." Followed the soft whimpering of a child, then the sound of blows again.

A red mist swam before Billy's eyes. In a flash he leaped upward and grasped the coping of the wall, heedless of the broken glass that might be imbedded thickly along its top, drew himself lithely up and dropped softly into the blackness on the other side. A little way before him, in the yellow rectangle of light streaming from an open door, stood a turbaned, bearded figure with upraised bamboo cane above a crouching, whimpering child—a boy it was, a boy of twelve or thirteen, certainly not more, who raised a tear-stained, terrorized face at this incredible apparition from out the inky night.

"Let be," Billy growled in Urdu. The tall native made a swift move toward his deep embroidered Bokhariot belt, and like a flash Billy's hard brown fist flashed up to land square on the point of the bearded chin. The native dropped like a poleaxed Brahminee bull and his turban rolled to Billy's feet.

Mechanically Billy picked it up; just as automatically he lifted the shrieking *Kunjiri* child to his feet. He clapped the turban on the child's head, still more or less thoughtlessly.

"Come thou," he said in the vernacular, as he slipped back to the wall. Swiftly he swung the slight form to its top; quickly he hauled himself over. Both dropped lightly into the black alley and Billy strode quickly to its farther end, the urchin at his heels.

Why under the sun had he acted so? What damnable impulse had prompted him to act in this quixotic fashion? Where would he take the lad—or what would he do with him when he got there? Mechanically he strode to his hotel and, still buried in thought, went up to his room, the lad hard at his heels.

"Thy name, *Kunjiri* (low caste)?" as the boy squatted on the floor.

"Chota Lal, oh Lion of the Helpless, Defender of the Weak."

"And he that beat thee?"

"Was Sikhandar Khan, oh, great Maharaja of the *Feringhi.*"

Billy pondered. Doubtless the boy was lying; all natives do when a white man questions them—or any other for that matter.

"Why did he beat thee?" he asked suddenly.

"Because I saw that which he had done to Mahbub Ali, the horse-trader," whispered the little Hindoo, and in his eyes dawned a growing terror.

"What!" shouted Billy, thoroughly aroused.

"Oh, do not beat me, master," wailed the lad, throwing himself at Billy's feet while his hands fluttered at Billy's ankles.

"What talk is this of beating?" growled Billy. "*I* do not beat beggar brats—if their talk is true. What talk is this of Mahbub the Afghan?"

"Last night it was, ere the first cockerow, in the black night beside the train. Sikhandar Khan and one other"—the boy's face worked pitifully—"Sikhandar Khan and that other——" Wordlessly he pantomimed what he feared to tell.

"Dead?" whispered Billy.

The lad nodded solemnly.

So *this* explained Mahbub Ali's failure to appear! Dead! Waylaid beyond the railroad station that shouldered the Kashmir Serai at its other end. Waylaid and robbed, no doubt,

in the darkness of the railroad yards. Buy why? Why? Billy's dazed mind ran in circles. Something tremendously important it must be to force Sikhandar Khan and his confederate to such a step in Lahore, of all cities. On the road beyond the border—there dead men are a commonplace that excites little or no comment. But here, right under the nose of the police, under the long arm of the British Raj——. A soundless whistle of amazement came from his lips. Meditatively he stared at the lad unrolling Sikhandar Khan's turban from about his head.

"But why, little Friend of All the Stars?" he asked.

The lad flashed him a smile at the endearment.

"I think because of this," and he held out what he had found secreted in the folds of the soiled cloth.

Billy took the foot-long silken rope and fingered it curiously. Silk? Yes—no—was it after all? More attentively he examined it. Silk-like the cord surely was, but no silk such as he had ever seen before. A solid rope, finger-thick, incredibly strong as he found out by tugging on the ends with might and main. But silk! In all the world there was no worm that could spin such a monster thread as this! Artificial? It must be. Yet no! Billy would stake all his knowledge of silk—and that was considerable—that this was no artificial substitute. His mind took another turn as he considered the importance of this thing. No wonder Mahbub Ali had bid him come in haste! No wonder that imperturbable Afghan had been wildly excited! A cordage such as this—why, it was priceless! A fortune for some lucky one, this stuff he held in his grasp! His mind raced on in a maze of speculation as he pictured the upheaval in the industrial world that this new material would produce. For it was new—never had he seen or heard of such a thing! If he could get it for the Kimball lines—he was made! And so was Mahbub Ali!

His face clouded as he remembered. Mahbub Ali was dead. He had perished and the secret of this wonder had perished with him. Had it, indeed? Or had the dastardly Sikhandar Khan and his helper Thug forced from Mahbub the precious secret? Probably not; else they would not be still in Lahore. Had they known, they must assuredly have gone post-haste after it. Or, wait—perhaps they were hiding from the long arm of the police for that cowardly murder. What a way to die! By strangulation with the deadly silken coil thrown about the neck from behind! He died by the silken cord of Thuggee that another might possess his one treasure; another silken cord—but such a cord!

A long time Billy pondered, thinking of ways and means, weighing the evidence pro and con, sitting in rapt meditation, while the little Hindoo lad crouched at his feet like a graven image.

At last Billy saw his way clear, through those peculiar thought-processes that he employed so sucessfully. He rose to his feet.

"Come, my little Prince of Troubles, thou Son of Shaitan," he grinned good-humoredly at the lad. "It is our Kismet—thine and mine. And our star, it is the red one of War." He pointed out the open windows at red Mars lying low in the heavens. "Wilt thou come with me?" he asked banteringly in the vernacular.

"Thou art my father and my mother. Didst thou not save me from Sikhandar Khan when he would have slain me?" asked the *Kunjiri* lad.

Billy started. He had not expected such plain words as these; such devotion from a mere baby for the slight service he had rendered. As for Sikhandar Khan slaying the lad—nonsense! And yet—child though he was,

he knew far too much about that rascally rogue.

As he turned to go, Billy bethought himself of that precious thing, the silken cord, and as he tucked it within his bosom he slipped his flat automatic into his pocket as an afterthought. If these rogues had killed Mahbub Ali for this, surely they would do no less for him in their determination to repossess themselves of it.

He strode back the way he had come, through the Motee Bazar to the still noisy Kashmir Serai, as active all night long as by daylight—more so, even—for the Oriental turns day into night or night into day, imperturbably. But it is noteworthy that he kept to the wide, well-lighted thoroughfares and avoided that short cut through the alleys as he would the plague. And his eyes roved incessantly about, never still a moment, while Chota Lal dogged his footsteps, a faithful little shadow.

Billy had decided on his course of action. He had determined to retrace Mahbub Ali's footsteps as best he might. Though he could ill spare the time, he would make the weary trip, for he was playing, he realized, for millions. That these millions would flow into the Kimball line's coffers were he successful troubled him not a whit. His was the joy of the game, the pitting of his wits against those others, the winning, all alone, against he knew not what, nor cared.

He remembered that Mahbub Ali had a partner who was a cousin of sorts, and that partner he found after a long weary search in that maggot-like Oriental crowd, but trying to make him talk was a more difficult thing; for he had all the native's aversion against truth-telling and there was, besides, such a pitiful bit to be found out.

From the few of Mahbub's caravan train that had not gone to seek employment elsewhere, he found out that Mahbub Ali had come through Mussoorie Pahar from Rampur, and before that from Chini. Beyond that the trail was blank, nor would they talk overmuch of Chini, that valley in the High Hills. Was it not a place of Shaitans, where stalked Murrah and Awan, the Companion of Kings, and other devils and djinns without number? They were all *Jullalee*, those devils — all terrible; that much was certain.

That was the sum total of information that Billy carried back to his hotel in the early morning after cursing them all heartily as children of the devil Mushoot, the Lord of Liars. Nor was he surprized to find that during his absence the place had been searched and ransacked most thoroughly. He had expected that. But he had not expected them to *bukk* (bungle) the job as they had done. His opinion of Sikhandar Khan dropped distinctly as he surveyed the disorder. Small matter. There was nothing they could have found there that mattered.

He grinned at Chota Lal, who was stuffing himself with more delicacies than he had ever before eaten at one time, then winced as a movement of the young body showed the raised bamboo welts of the beating of the night before. Sikhandar Khan would have to pay through the nose for that night's work. In the fullness of time there would be a bitter bill for him to foot.

"As soon as may be," he said in the vernacular, "we go upon the road, thou and I. A long trail, a weary trail, perhaps even a trail of death, oh my son. What matter? Art thou minded even yet to follow me?"

"If I eat thy bread how shall I forget thee, oh Father of All the Friendless?"

"Well said, little one," and for the waif there welled a great affection in his heart, a friendship, a love that was to endure for longer than either of them realized. A thousand times we

have heard of love at first sight between the sexes. A thousand and one tales have been woven about it. Can that happen only between man and woman? Perhaps so; I do not know. But between the Englishman and the little half-starved, beaten, low-caste lad there sprang up then a bond that was to lead to—but that is another story.

Two days later found the pair at Simla, the summer capital of India, among the hills, where each house looks down upon the roof-pots of its neighbors on the terrace below; and that same week found the two attached to the hunting-party of one of Billy's English friends who was bound for the High Hills. Ostensibly Billy was going to hunt, a carefree adventurer with no thought in the world other than sport. And Chota Lal, resourceful little devil that he was, was one of the hangers-on who followed them, subsisting on the careless bounty of the sahibs.

But a very different Chota Lal this, from that one who had pattered through the Motee Bazar living on his wits and the charity of those minded to acquire merit. That one had been a beggar brat in soiled and ragged clothing; this one was an Afghan lad from the top of his clean blue turban to the tips of his long upcurled slippers; impudent, and likable withal, but a total stranger to Billy — a stranger lad who mingled with the shikaris and the syees—the hunters and the grooms—or the personal servants in the swarm that always attends the Anglesi on such a trip, but he mingled not with the lordly sahibs; though of a night, had he been watched, he might have been seen to wriggle as softly as a snake into Sahib Singleton's tent to retail to him the varied gossip of the day that he had picked up.

It was his strong young voice that roused the camp to ineffectual uproar one night when he found a greased and slippery devotee of Thuggee bound for the same place. The Thug had vanished into the thin black night, easily evading the clutching hands and clumsy efforts of the sleepy servants, scarce roused from their first heavy slumber; he had gone from there, but he had left behind him that dread cord of his office: it lay in Billy Sahib's hand as Chota Lal whispered of the events of the day.

But by now their wandering road led no longer climbing, dipping, sweeping about the spurs and the stony hillsides where sounded the voices of a thousand and one watercourses, with the solemn deodars climbing one after the other with down-drooping branches. The vista of the far-rolled-out plains beneath them was done; the Sewaliks and the half-tropical Doon were behind them along with Mussoorie.

The deodars had given place to oak and birch, holly and pine, gay with rhododendrons and ferns; the bare hillsides were slippery with sunburnt grass, to merge again with the cool woodlands, while above them flamed Kedernath and Badjunath in the sunrise and sunset, true kings of the wilderness. And the gentle breezes that had blown cool in those early marches now bit deeply at heat-accustomed flesh and tugged with fierce clutching fingers at wholly inadequate garments.

Billy Singleton grinned cheerfully at these things and at the steep, breath-taking short cuts that the hillmen insisted on making, but it was no laughing matter to poor Chota Lal, who had never been so high in the diamond-clear air in all these, his twelve years. And too, Chota Lal had all the plainsman's love for a beaten trail though it wound its six-foot width as tortuously as any snake over all the country.

Along the track lay the occasional villages of the hill folk—rude huts of mud and earth and now and then a rare, crudely ax-carved timber, like

swallows' nests against the steep pitches, or huddled on tiny flats midway on a four-thousand-foot slide, or jammed, perhaps, into a tiny crevice of the cliffs that funneled and focused every wandering blast.

And the villagers! Greasy, sallow, duffle-clad; bare-legged, short, squat, yellow-faced—truly this was indeed a land of Shaitans and Djinns!

Here it was that Billy slipped away from the rest of the party after a short earnest chat with Foster Sahib the day that Chota Lal had retailed to him a bit of gossip he had picked up regarding a red-bearded stranger of two months gone who had come from Shamlegh Midden, where few men have trod, where even the Hillmen will not go. He had pushed away from this somber land as though all the sons of Eblis were indeed after him. Mahbub Ali beyond all reasonable doubt! Billy's heart sang within him as he followed the plain lead.

How he and Chota Lal ever got down those awe-inspiring cliffs only Allah the Merciful and the Compassionate knows — surely it was His hand that led them on.

How Sikhandar Khan and that other followed — truly that was the work of a *jumalee* (well-wishing) Shaitan—none other! For follow they did less than eight hours after the others.

And on those great boulder-strewn slopes, cut up by narrow abysses that yawned to unguessed depths, weird and horrible even under the bright sun that scarce burned the bitterest of the chill from the cold air, Billy came upon the rope again. Fifty feet long it must have been, stretching over the cliff edge to a projecting ledge below—and it was glued to the rocks! Billy's cheeks were blanched as he faced the terrified boy.

"It is truly the work of the djinns!" panted Chota Lal. "Let us go—and quickly."

"Hast thou fear for a djinn," teased Billy, "thou Babe of Small Courage?"

Chota flushed and wriggled uncomfortably but stood his ground.

"Then, too, oh my master, there is that matter of the two specks that I saw this morning behind us."

Billy's face grew grave. "Why didst thou not tell me ere this, little Prince of the Plains?"

Sikhandar Khan and his confederate that must be, following the plain trail they had left. Well, let them come. Billy felt himself more than a match for both of them as he looked at his Mannlicher and patted the flat automatic lovingly. If it came to a fight, he was more than willing, he and Chota Lal. If they two lost out—and then his thoughts turned to the faithful little bazar imp beside him. After what he had seen of Sikhandar Khan's treatment of Chota—he shut his teeth with a snap. He must not fail.

They ate from the canned provisions that they had brought; ate in a cranny of sheltering boulders with the declining sun scarce warming the chill air of these high places; then Billy half dozed against a solid rock as he watched and Chota Lal slept fitfully under his thin blanket until Billy wrapped his own about the sleeping child while the cold stars looked down on the unbroken solitude.

THE moon sank slowly to rest; dawn was not far off when they heard that first hoarse shout of terror. It was followed by another and another, until the hills echoed and re-echoed to the clamor.

Billy flashed to his feet. "Come," he said authoritatively to the wide-eyed boy as he played his flashlight about. Cautiously they moved through the gloom in the direction of the din, their flashlight picking out their path, while Billy's revolver swung free in his other hand.

What a sight met their eyes! Sikhandar Khan it was, indeed; a piti-

ful, terrorized wreck of that bearded ruffian, straining and struggling desperately against more of those odd ropes. Rayed from a common center these were, like the spokes of a wheel, and fastened tightly to the rocks at waist height, while across them in concentric circles that began at that common center was another.

As Sikhandar Khan saw them in the lightening dawn he stretched an imploring arm to them and struggled anew while the network of ropes shook under the fury of his struggles.

Gingerly Billy felt of the nearest strand of that odd net before he set his weight upon it. His hand stuck tenaciously to its glistening, viscous surface. So *that* was how Sikhandar Khan was being held, was it? And in his every struggle, whenever he touched it anew, that net but clung the tighter to the new hold.

What the devil was it, anyway? And whose the hand that had stretched it there? Billy dropped on all fours to crawl along under it after shouting to the frenzied man to cease struggling; but it was doubtful if that fear-maddened one even heard him.

Billy had no desire to have that sticky thing catch him helplessly by the back. He jammed his automatic into his pocket and brought out his knife, intending to cut the man free; then he crawled carefully inward, glancing ever and anon at the brightening sky. The false dawn was done; the day had come.

Again came Sikhandar's frenzied thrashing, though he was now almost helplessly fastened to that dreadful net. Billy lay flat on the stony ground while those viscous ropes vibrated dangerously close to his body. As the struggles ceased he crawled on again toward that helpless unfortunate. The first rays of the newly risen sun shone upon him and turned that net to gold, gilding that colorful human fly in this gigantic spiderweb.

That was what the damnable thing reminded him of: a monster spiderweb—admitting for the moment that such a thing could be. Billy had seen spiders in his travels that snared and killed small birds—with their webs a few feet across. Horrid, saucer-shaped things those spiders were, whose bite was poisonous, producing sickness that lasted for days, that might even cause death if not cared for; but this—no, this was something entirely beyond his knowledge. He was under Sikhandar Khan now, and he rolled over on his back.

"Be still, dog," he ordered as he raised his knife. At the sound of his voice Sikhandar Khan thrashed more wildly than ever and his hoarse voice called upon all the gods of Hind for succor.

"Be still, *bût-parast* (idol-worshiper)," growled Billy in disgust.

"Ohé Billee Sahib, beware! The djinn! Behold, it comes!" screamed Chota Lal in accents of such terror that Billy's upraised arm dropped paralyzed. The net above him vibrated with a curious trembling motion. Billy screwed his head around and lay stupefied with horror. Shades of all the Sons of Eblis! By the Thousand and One Shaitans of the deeper and nethermost Hells! What was this terrible monster? Was it in very truth one of those devils that the Hillmen swore inhabited these wilds?

Huge, leggy, bristly, it flashed toward them. Its legs covered a fifteen-foot circle; its body was a globular bag, gleaming iridescently with blues and greens and blacks, mottled with vivid red splotches the size of a man's head. In a sort of spiny plate on its front were set six gleaming black eyes that glinted redly in the golden haze. The plate and bag were borne on those huge spiky legs four feet or more above the net.

It flashed onto the helpless man above him swifter than the eye could follow and paused there an instant while a lancet-like arm flashed into Sikhandar Khan's upturned stomach.

Sikhandar Khan gave a convulsive

shudder and hung limply below the hellish monster, while Billy in a daze of horror lay just below it, so close that he could almost touch the damnable thing.

A spider! It *couldn't* be—but it was—a spider greater than any that the world had ever seen! And it stood there on its net above him sucking out the juices from that lifeless body that a moment before had been a man! He heard Chota Lal sobbing and screaming in terror where he had left him.

In a curious, detached sort of way Billy slowly and carefully drew his automatic, moving almost imperceptibly. To his dazed faculties it seemed as though his mind stood apart from his body and watched those actions which were his own as though they were those of a stranger. The gun flashed — once — twice — thrice — as Billy shot pointblank into that terrible thing just above him. The acrid fumes choked and blinded him, and when he could open his eyes again the Thing was gone, but Sikhandar Khan's body still sagged limply above him. The man was dead! Billy knew that from the drawn, pinched features. That hideous Thing had sucked every drop of blood from out the body. But the Thing was gone!

IT SEEMED ages before Billy retraced his slow, crawling way back to the shrinking, hysterical lad, and he himself was shaking as with nervous ague.

"Whence came the—the Shaitan?" Billy whispered. "And whither went it, oh my son?"

Chota Lal clung wildly to him and pressed his shaking little body tightly against him. Billy could feel the furious, frightened beating of his heart in the little breast that pressed so close against his own.

"Oh my master, let us fly. Quickly, ere it follow and leap upon us as it did upon that—that——"

"There, there, lad," Billy soothed, forcing himself to speak English. "It's only a spider—but the biggest thing I ever saw or heard of. It's no devil, though it looks like one. Come, lad, where did it go?" He repeated the question in Urdu.

Chota Lal's only answer was to clutch him the tighter.

"No! No! Billee Sahib! Let us go! Do not seek the djinn! It will but take thee as it took that other," he wailed.

Gently Billy disengaged the lad's arms from about his neck and picked up his Mannlicher. "Fear not for me, little one. I shall slay this Thing. Tell me but whither it went."

Slowly he paced the wide circumference of the net, seeking the vanished monster. On the opposite side he paused. Was that not one of the Thing's legs projecting between those boulders?

"Heave thou a stone, my son," he whispered to Chota Lal, who kept tight by his side. The lad demurred. Billy insisted. At last Chota tossed a stone the size of a baseball in that direction.

There was no movement, but Billy was more convinced than ever that it was one of the creature's legs that he saw. He inched nearer and nearer until he had a glimpse of that brilliantly colored horrible body. Slowly the rifle raised, flashed, and the hills thundered to its sharp report. Still no movement.

"Seest thou? It is as I said. The Thing is dead."

He drew nearer until he could see the horrid Thing in its entirety. It was surely dead. When he had satisfied himself on that point he crawled under the net once more and succeeded in hacking down Sikhandar Khan's body and then in dragging it out.

"First we bury this," he said as Chota Lal begged him to leave.

A shallow grave was dug at last and stones heaped above the miserable wretch before Billy Singleton with a sigh set his face back along the way he had come.

He had won through, but at what

a cost! Had won through and reaped only a disappointment. "It's all in the game," he grunted to himself as he and Chota Lal were climbing back along that dizzy way they had come. He had hoped — with a start he realized that he had come wholly without hopes or plans. He had come for the love of the game alone.

A thousand feet they climbed in a little over a mile, and above them they could see the hillside where wound the path.

"Be brave, thou Little Lion of the Plains," Billy encouraged as they breasted that last steep boulder-strewn slope.

The noise of a rifle sounded above that of the wind; Chota Lal gave an agonized yelp, spun round, and would have slipped down that dizzy slope had Billy not caught him by the arm and dragged him to the shelter of some boulders close at hand.

"What the devil — why, you're hurt, kid," he exclaimed in surprize as he stared at his bloody hand. A flesh wound only, through the upper arm, he found out as he cut away the cloth. Luckily no bones had been broken and no artery severed; the wound, though it bled freely, and was painful, was not dangerous.

"There to the left, he is, behind those bushes, Billee Sahib," whispered Chota Lal, grimacing with pain as Billy tore his own shirt to strips for bandages. "I saw the smoke as I fell."

"Why, you nervy little beggar," grinned Billy in delighted surprize.

"Beggar will I never be again, Billee Sahib, lest I bring dishonor to thee," and Chota Lal smiled faintly.

"So be it. By the bullet that laid thee low, beggar shalt thou never be again, but mine own son forevermore. Chota Lal."

He picked up the rifle again and peered round the edge of the protecting boulder. Again the report and the angry scream of the bullet as it ricocheted from the stone.

"That devil can really shoot," Billy whispered softly to himself as he crawled swiftly downward to another boulder, keeping carefully out of sight of the unknown marksman.

Then ensued a tedious game of stalking between the two. An hour went by. Billy could see Chota Lal lying where he had left him, but glimpse that other he could not. He cursed softly as the sun dropped slowly toward the west. Something must be done. But what?

Chota Lal solved the problem by standing up suddenly with a shout. Billy caught the gleam of the other's rifle, saw him half rise, and then Billy shot swiftly in a panic of fear. Suppose that fellow got Chota Lal! The other's gun exploded, but the bullet went wild, for the brain behind it was done. Billy's steel-jacketed bullet had found its mark. The unknown rifleman half straightened, toppled over slowly and went slithering down the slope head foremost, to drop off that tremendous cliff, his rifle clattering after him as it dropped from his nerveless fingers.

"Hast thou lost thy little grain of sense, thou Son of Eblis?" Billy scolded as he helped Chota Lal up those last steep reaches. Chota Lal grinned—the impudent, carefree grin that had so endeared him to Billy.

"Thou art my father and my mother, oh Billee Sahib. I have eaten thy bread and thy salt. Shall I then forget it? I stood up in sight so that one might show himself to thee. What matter though I died, so thou wert freed?"

The LIFE-MASTERS

by EDMOND HAMILTON

"A great wave of living protoplasm swept through the streets, licking them clean of life."

THE first intimation the world received of the life-masters and of the doom that they were to loose upon it was contained in a news dispatch sent out by the great press syndicates from New York in the last week of May. That first article, a brief one, stated only that during the last day or so the beaches about the metropolis had been closed to bathers by reason of a thick scum of clear gray, jelly-like substance that had been left upon them by the retreating tides. This clear slime, which exhibited a few signs of rudimentary life and movement, had been deposited also by the tides upon the sea-walls and dock-piles about the city, and had been reported too from a score or more of places along the New Jersey and New England seaboard. These glistening deposits, the dispatch added, were considered to be in all probability the result of some sea-migration of a great mass of minute, jelly-like organisms.

That first dispatch, the true sinister importance of which we can well understand now, was treated at the time as merely one of scores of other re-

ports of mildly interesting incidents. The phenomenon was unusual, certainly, but hardly enough so to merit any special attention. This was evidenced by the small space given the matter by the New York newspapers on that same evening, most of them according it but a few inconspicuous lines; though one went so far as to publish a photograph of the curious onlookers who had gathered to watch the glistening scum of the stuff, slowly moving and flexing a little now and then, that had been deposited on the Battery sea-wall. Save for these casually curious ones, though, and the disgusted bathers who found themselves barred by it from their favorite beaches, it can not be said that any portion of the public, even in such seaside cities as New York, gave the advent of the glistening gray stuff any consideration on that afternoon and evening. It was not until the newspapers of the following morning, the 26th, published their later dispatches on the phenomenon that the world, or the scientific world at least, began to awake to its extraordinary nature.

Those dispatches converted the matter from a mere unusual incident into something like a minor sensation. For, according to them, the deposits of glistening gray slime had been left by the tides not only along the Atlantic coast but along the Pacific also, and not only along American shores but upon those of Europe and Asia and Africa, upon all the shores of all earth's seas, in fact. Upon the jungle-bordered beaches of the Philippines, and the cold gray Norwegian shores, and the shelving sands of the Chilean coast, and the rocky cliffs of England, the retreating tides had left the same thick coatings of jelly-like, living slime. The phenomenon, whatever its cause, was world-wide, as those morning dispatches showed, and because of that world-wide scope was accorded a greatly increased space by the majority of that morning's newspapers, seeming extraordinary enough to call for greater attention. And even more extraordinary was it made, later in that day, by the Barr-McMasters controversy concerning it, that acrid dispute of scientists about the phenomenon's causes that stirred even the public into a somewhat greater interest in it.

The controversy was precipitated, with surprising abruptness, by the statement made by Dr. Almeric Barr early on the 26th. It was toward Dr. Barr, whose reputation among contemporary biologists was exceeded only by that of the brilliant Dr. Herbert Munson of the Starford Foundation, that the puzzled newspapers had turned when the glistening deposits had first appeared at New York. They had brought him samples of the stuff, asking his opinion of it, and his curiosity had been so stirred that he had undertaken an analysis of it. It had proved, apparently, an interesting enough analysis, for it was not until the next day that he had given to the waiting journals any summary of it. When that summary was published, though, appearing in the noon editions of that day's papers, it proved a startling one.

The glistening deposits, Dr. Barr stated, were nothing more nor less that protoplasm, that gray, jelly-like stuff that is the primal life-substance, the basis of all life upon earth. Protoplasm itself, he explained, composed of an extremely complex mixture of organic compounds, had never been analyzed or even partly analyzed, and no more could these clear deposits be analyzed, but his investigation had proved without doubt that they were living protoplasm, and not the minute organisms that had been supposed. The appearance of these deposits on all earth's shores, he added, meant that great quantities of protoplasm had appeared in all earth's seas, and that could be explained in only one way. Protoplasm, the primal life-stuff, had appeared in earth's seas eons before, its complex

compounds built by some force out of the elements of sea-silt and sea-water themselves. And if those protoplasmic masses had formed spontaneously out of the sea's elements eons before, giving rise eventually to all earth's life, it could only be supposed that similar great protoplasmic masses had now suddenly formed again in earth's seas in the same way as in the remote past.

That first report of Dr. Barr's, though puzzling enough to a newspaper reading public but little interested in talk of organic and inorganic compounds, proved a sensation in the scientific and especially in the biological world. The New York biologist's classification of the clear, jelly-like deposits as protoplasm was, it was admitted, correct; since by that time scientists in laboratories at London and Stockholm and Sydney had confirmed independently the fact that the glistening gray stuff was indeed the basic life-substance of earth. What was not admitted, though, and what swiftly became the center of as fiery a scientific controversy as could be recalled, was his contention that the great masses of protoplasm which had apparently appeared throughout the seas had been formed spontaneously from the sea's inorganic elements, as in the remote past. That contention, within hours of the time his statement was published, became a veritable storm-center of conflicting scientific opinion.

The opinion of a great mass of biologists was curtly summed up late in that afternoon by Professor Theodore McMaster, biologist-in-chief of one of the great Massachusetts universities. "While Dr. Barr is undoubtedly right in assuming that great quantities of protoplasm have in some way appeared in all earth's seas," he stated, "his theory that those masses have formed suddenly out of the sea's inorganic elements is, with all respect, a crazy one. It is true that in the earth's youth such great protoplasmic masses did form thus from the elements of sea-silt, but we know that their process of formation, their change from inorganic to organic living matter, required eons in itself to complete, so slow was it. This hypothesis, therefore, that the same great process has taken place on a world-wide scale within a day or so is patently absurd. My own theory is that great masses of protoplasm have existed from the remote past on the sea's floor, and that some subterranean or submarine convulsion has thrown them up to be scattered by the tides upon all earth's coasts."

This new theory, it must be admitted, found much greater support in biological circles than the more radical one of Dr. Barr, but it was roundly criticized by the latter. The presence of protoplasm in great masses on the sea's floor, he pointed out, had never been detected by any of the great oceanographic expeditions of the past, and the stupid hypothesis of a submarine convulsion could hardly be held when there was no slightest seismographic evidence of such a convulsion having taken place within the last weeks. Dr. Barr was supported in these criticisms by a number of fellow biologists, and so acrid had become the exchange of opinions by the next day, the 27th, that one of the great scientific societies, the World Science Association, stepped in. It proposed to settle the question of the phenomenon's causes to the satisfaction of public and scientists alike by appointing a committee of research to investigate it, to be headed by Dr. Herbert Munson of the Starford Foundation, the most noted biologist of the day.

This was a proposition acceptable to all, for the cold, massive Dr. Munson's competence and scientific impartiality were unquestioned. The World Science Association found, however, to its disappointment, that the brilliant biologist had been absent from the Starford Foundation for some months. He had established a

laboratory at Cone Island, a little isle of rock and sand off the north Maine coast, it was stated, and was engaged in research there with a small group of scientists, which included Dr. Albert Labreau, a famous bio-chemist; Harlan Kingsford, electro-dynamics expert of the American Electric Company; Dr. Herman Krauner, the noted German bio-physicist, whose studies of the biological effects of radio-active vibrations had been the subject of much discussion; and Dr. Richard Mallett, a rising young cytologist, who was also of the Starford Foundation.

It was from another of the younger scientists at the Foundation, Dr. Ernest Ralton, that the Association had secured this statement of Dr. Munson's whereabouts, and Ralton had offered, moreover, to fly north in his plane to the island and lay the Association's request before the famous biologist. This offer had been at once accepted, for it was not doubted that Dr. Munson's passion for experimentation would cause him to accept the chief place on the committee of research. Late on the afternoon of the 27th, therefore, announcement was made from the World Science Association's office that Ralton had left in his plane for the island, and that when he returned with Dr. Munson the Association's committee of research would be formed and would start its investigations.

This announcement, though it caused the disputing biologists to await keenly Dr. Munson's return, proved unexciting to newspapers and public, whose first half-interest in the phenomenon had begun to wane. The newspapers, indeed, in publishing the Association's announcement humorously suggested that the whole controversy over the origin of some slime on the world's beaches was a battle between tweedledum and tweedledee. And the public, with a guffaw or a smile, assented. The whole thing merely went to show the craziness of scientists—thus did common sense deliver itself, that evening. Common sense was not to suspect, certainly, what strange craziness it was that lay behind the appearance of that glistening slime. Common sense was not to dream, until it awoke to the thunder of crashing worlds, what terrible craziness it was that had loosed upon humanity with that glistening scum a titanic tide of dreadful death which even at that moment was surging slowly upward to sweep across all the world.

2

Just before midnight on that same night it was, less than a dozen hours after the Association's announcement, that the horror broke upon the world. Had the thing come gradually upon us, place by place and event after event, it would be possible to give some consecutive account of it, now. But, crashing down upon almost all the astounded world at the same moment as it did, the very scope of it makes futile any efforts to describe completely the terror of that world when it awoke to doom. It is enough, indeed, if we can give some impression of its action at such a city as New York, for there, of all places, its horror was the most intensified.

The accounts of the thing's coming to New York are almost numberless, and it is from one of these, that of Edward Worley, that we find what is perhaps our most vivid picture of the thing. Worley's account, to which he has given the somewhat banal title of *My Experiences in the Life Horror*, not only gives us a description of the first coming of the horror at New York, but summarizes in fact the action of the thing over all the world. For as it was in New York that night, so it was in a thousand seaside cities in that same hour, and what Worley saw in its streets was seen by millions of horror-stricken men in that same night. The magnitude of the thing was greater at New York, but the hor-

ror was the same, as Worley indeed points out.

This Edward Worley figures unconsciously in his own narrative as a somewhat commonplace individual, a middle-aged person, the greater part of whose days had been spent in the adding and subtracting of figures in a Broad Street broker's office. To avoid crowded subways, as he tells us, Worley had taken rooms in one of the narrow lodging-houses jammed in here and there east of the financial section, at Manhattan's lower extremity. It was this fact that conspired with circumstances to project Worley into the very heart of the terror's first coming. For, a half-hour before midnight on that fateful night of the 27th, he had decided that a short stroll through the warm spring air would be a pleasant one, and his steps had led him southward toward the Battery's little open park.

It was an hour, that just before midnight, when the southern end of that great island-mass of structures that is New York lies beneath a silence and a loneliness supernatural, almost. So it seemed to Worley, at least, strolling southward in the warm spring night through the silent streets, from one pool of corner lamplight to another, between the towering, vast buildings that loomed into the darkness on either side. Those buildings, the center of unparalleled activity in the hours of day, lay as silent beneath the white spring stars as though they were the still unbroken ruins of some mighty, deserted city. Northward, from the midtown section, a glow of light against the sky told of the life that still surged through the crowded streets there, but Worley, strolling on, met none save an occasional policeman who eyed him keenly beneath the corner lights. Then within moments more puffs of fresh salt air came to his nostrils, and he was passing out between the last of the great buildings, out beneath the looming tracks of the elevated and into the silent little park.

As Worley tells it, he had strolled half-way across the darkened park, toward its southern sea-wall's rail, before he sensed that anything unusual lay before him. The gleaming waters stretching out into the darkness, the gliding lights of small craft here and there upon them, the other far-flung blinking lights of Brooklyn and the Jersey cities, away to left and to right—these were all that engrossed his attention in those first moments. Then, as he drew within yards of the southern rail, he stopped abruptly short. He had glimpsed, suddenly, a great glistening wet mass that lay at the sea-wall's edge, ahead of him, and that seemed to be slowly moving.

"It was," he says, "just as though someone had dumped a great mass of glistening gelatin at the park's edge, wet and gleaming there in the light of the few scattered bulbs about me. All along the park's edge, along its sea-wall, that glistening mass stretched, hanging down over the wall into the lapping sea-waters, and as the stuff seemed slowly moving I thought it for that moment to be pouring down into the sea beneath. Then as I stood there, gazing at that smooth-flowing movement of the gleaming stuff, I saw something that made me rub my eyes in amazement. The glistening masses were not flowing down into the sea at all, I saw, but instead were flowing *up* from it!"

For a moment of utter astonishment Worley stood still, gazing toward the stuff. A gray, glistening mass, it was pouring slowly and smoothly up over the wall's edge, from the sea beneath, flowing steadily up onto the surface of the park and adding to the great, gleaming mass of the stuff that lay already all around that park's sea-edge! The thing was unprecedented; it was incredible, and for a moment that seemed unending to Worley, he stared toward those shining, gath-

ering jelly-like masses that were flowing and flexing and writhing a few feet before him. Then suddenly a great, thick loop of the glistening jelly —a great *arm*—projected itself out from the gliding masses and darted straight toward him!

It was that that finally broke the spell of Worley's stupefaction, for as the great arm looped toward him he staggered back, giving unconscious utterance to a high scream. At that same moment of utter horror, he says, by some strange trick of the mind there had flashed across his brain remembrance of the feebly moving clear slime that had been found on beach and sea-wall in the last days, but that fleeting thought dissolved for the moment in the stark horror that now filled him. Another great looping arm had shot out beside the first, lengthening smoothly and swiftly toward him, while the gliding, jelly-like masses from which both projected were flowing toward him, across grass and paving—great glistening, amorphous bulks a full yard in height, now, gathering greater bulk each moment by the masses that still were flowing up from the waters over the park's wall to add to them. Worley, though, had seen this in but a single dazed glimpse, for as the second arm had shot toward him he had stumbled backward again, crying out, and then was running weakly toward the park's north end.

FROM beneath the overhung elevated tracks, as he ran toward them, there leapt to meet him two blue-coated figures, one with a pistol gleaming in his hand, and at sight of the policeman whom his cries had summoned Worley became incoherent in his horror.

"Coming out of the water over the park!" he could only tell them hoarsely, gesturing toward the southern end. "Gray jelly-stuff—protoplasm like it said in the newspapers—masses of it coming out——"

The two surveyed him doubtfully a moment, then, peering into the darkness at the park's lower end, began to walk slowly in that direction, their weapons outstretched. His heart pounding rapidly Worley watched them vanishing into the darkness. There was a moment of silence, a silence in which the rattle of a train far to the north came preternaturally loudly to his ears. Then he heard a sudden sharp exclamation from the darkness southward, and the next moment the darkness was split by a spurt of flame and the deafening rattle of shots. Then, against the gleaming waters beyond, he glimpsed great arms flashing upward like dark, mighty tentacles, and as they flashed down again the shots ceased, there were sharp screams, suddenly cut off, and then silence again. Worley, trembling, gazed still down into the little park, and after a moment saw movement there, a slow movement approaching him. Finally it came within the radiance of the nearer lights, and he saw that it was the great, glistening, gray masses, flowing smoothly across the park toward him, flowing up as smoothly still from the waters around it, and that in the clear, jelly-like bulk gliding toward him were held, like flies in amber, the dark, twisted bodies of two men!

With that sight a daze of horror settled upon Worley's brain. He was dimly aware that he was racing unsteadily northward from the park, through the darkened, silent streets, that from somewhere else behind him were coming other screams, the high screams of a woman, this time, and that from away across the waters to the east had come suddenly other faint, agonized cries. He heard as though from a great distance a sudden babel of shouts and screams that swept along the great city's edges like spreading flame, heard bells jangling suddenly out to add to that uproar. By then he had staggered eastward into the district of his own lodgings,

moved by unconscious habit, but as he stumbled down one of those narrow streets eastward a sudden rising uproar a few blocks ahead of him brought him to a stand-still. Then, the first swirling mists of horror lifting from his brain, he stared down along the narrow street.

Along its darkened length only circular patches of light at intersections were visible to him but now he saw, fleeing into those light-areas toward him, a growing mob of half-dressed people who were pouring from the bordering buildings into the street, running wildly with gesticulating hands and with hoarse cries of animal fear. Far down the street, almost to the waterfront eastward, Worley could see that growing mob pouring forth, fleeing toward him, and then he saw, too, what was behind them and what they fled from so wildly. For at the narrow street's eastern end there was rolling smoothly toward him, and after those fleeing figures, a great, glistening gray wave, waist-high, a gliding mass of gleaming jelly-stuff that stretched across the street's width and flowed effortlessly after the fugitives, great looping arms forming from it and reaching forth to draw them back into its glistening masses, that flowed smoothly onward with those fugitives' bodies in their grip!

Remembrance of half-read newspaper articles flashed again over Worley's brain in that moment. "Protoplasm!" he cried, unconsciously, again. "Masses of it—and sweeping up over all the city!"

For in ever-increasing floods the gray, glistening masses of protoplasm were rolling forward, from the waters eastward; were surging through the narrow streets with that fear-crazed mob fleeing before them; were flowing swiftly and smoothly into buildings, from the interior of which came terrible shrieks; were shooting forth great tentacle arms of their own jelly-like substance to catch and draw back the weeping little figures that fled before it. A mighty, mindless, brainless, nerveless monster, a great wave of living protoplasm that was sweeping up and flowing through streets and buildings to lick them clean of all life! From southward, and from westward, were coming screams and cries as other great waves poured through the streets, as out over the doomed great city there poured from the waters about it that mighty tide of death!

Worley leapt back, suddenly, as down the street from behind him there roared a long police-car, the fleeing mob ahead splitting to both sides as it thundered through. It skidded to a stop but yards from that advancing, glistening wave, and Worley saw blue-coated figures tumbling from it, staring in an amazement of horror at the great gleaming wave of protoplasm rolling toward them, then recovering themselves and lining swiftly across the street before it. Then there came the swift sharp drumming of powerful riot-guns, spraying tearing steel bullets into that advancing wave. At the same time came the dull detonation of grenades, hurled into the glistening masses, and for a moment Worley stared down toward them in sudden leaping hope.

But the flood of protoplasm rolled onward, unchecked, unheeding. The bullets that tore through its jelly-like masses left holes that closed instantly of themselves. The bombs that exploded in those masses splashed them violently to every side, but in the next moment the glistening fragments had flowed smoothly forward of themselves; had joined together again in a solid flood; were sweeping resistlessly forward. Before the men lined across the street could comprehend the fact that the thing before them could not be killed, or even hurt, by human means, the wave had advanced upon them; a myriad tentacle-arms had whipped out of it toward them; and then it had gripped and had rolled

over them, was gliding still smoothly on with their dark bodies visible in its clear gray masses.

Never afterward could Worley remember clearly the things that befell him in the next moments. He knew that with that sight a final mad frenzy of utter horror and despair had settled upon him, that with those other fleeing figures he was stumbling through the narrow streets toward the northward and the one chance of escape from the death-trap that the island had become, but his impressions of those mad moments were always hazy, dim. Striking, trampling, pushing, he and the panic-driven mobs about him fought their way through the choked streets, through the darkness of that dread night, while ever behind them, from south and east and west, there glided upon their track the mighty wave of protoplasm, calm, smooth, effortless, sweeping out over the island's tip and up through its narrow streets, absorbing into itself steadily the exhausted fugitives who fled before it, advancing northward and inward from the city's sides with its vast, glistening masses still steadily increased by the floods of protoplasm pouring up from the encircling waters.

To Worley, then, it was as though he was pushing his way onward through the fear-choked nightmares of some terrifying dream. The hoarse shouts of the fleeing thousands who were pouring forth from all the city's buildings to flee northward about him; the frantic clanging of bells and screeching of whistles; the thunder of bombs and crack of rifles as the city's defenders sought in vain to halt those gliding, irresistible masses; the agonised shrieks of those who fell before the great wave of death, of those trapped by it in buildings or in blind streets; the faint, far roar of panic that came from the other cities west and eastward; these merged in his mind into one mighty, unceasing bellow of utter terror.

For how many hours Worley had fought his way northward through the horror-driven millions that surged through the night of the city's streets before he reached at last the island's northern heights, he could not guess. There, pausing and swaying in a doorway while the roaring crowds surged over by him toward the Harlem River bridges that were the sole gates of escape from the island of death, he peered southward through the darkness. The great city, a far-flung mass of blinking lights, stretched before him, its streets alive here and there with other moving lights, with the mobs that surged wildly northward to escape from it, and from whom arose a dull, far roar of fear. Farther southward, though, in the midtown and lower sections, no lights moved, and there arose no cries, for there, surging up about and across the island like a great tide of utter silence and death, there rolled the mighty protoplasmic masses, sweeping all before them as they poured still up from the bordering seas, gliding onward in a single gigantic, glistening wave. As Worley turned and fought northward again with the crazed mobs that filled the streets, it came to him dully to wonder whether on all earth was any place of refuge from those mighty, mindless masses that had rolled out so suddenly and strangely from the sea.

Had Worley but known it, as he struggled northward through the last hours of that dread night, it was not at New York alone but on all the shores and in all the seaside cities of earth that humanity was fleeing at that moment before the protoplasmic tides of death. Up from all earth's seas at the same hour, the same moment almost, had rolled the same mighty glistening waves, flowing upward and sweeping out over mighty cities, and through tiny villages, and

over lonely, barren beaches—gigantic glistening protoplasm masses gliding at the same hour through the streets of London, and of Yokohama, of Copenhagen and of Miami, in a thousand cities sweeping humanity in fear-mad mobs before them.

Doom! It was the word that was flashing already from city and village by the sea to those inland, the word that was bursting across an astounded and horror-stricken world in those dread hours. The mighty waves of protoplasm, whatever their unthinkable origin, were unstopped, were unstoppable. Bullet and bomb and knife were harmless to them. High-explosive shells had scattered the waves only to have them in another moment join again, and military batteries hastily summoned had fired round upon round until they had been wiped out by those calmly advancing floods. Planes had swooped to bomb them with no greater effect than the shells. Gas had no effect upon these living floods. Onward, outward, they rolled, mighty glistening masses flowing upward from the sea to sweep across all the earth.

Doom! Man was facing it, and the reign and existence of man, with every horror-filled message coming by clicking wire or unseen radio-wave. England had become a death-trap, the mighty waves of protoplasm rolling in from all its coasts. India and Malaya were infernos of superstitious fear and horror as their crowded populations fled before the tides of death. African and Australian coasts were overwhelmed with the advancing glistening masses. The Panama isthmus had been covered by the protoplasm, severing the two American continents. Great ships at sea and in port had been dragged down into the depths by the up-reaching, towering masses. Doom! For ever, in those dread hours before the dawn, the calmly advancing waves were sweeping inland from every coast to cover all the world, and ever absorbing into their glistening masses, as a jelly-fish might absorb infusoria, thousands upon hundreds of thousands of fugitives, drawing them within its mindless living masses and rolling remorselessly on. Dawn of day found all the organizations of man crumbled before the doom closing upon them, all the world's millions in blind, horror-stricken flight before the protoplasmic tides of death. The thing was eating up humanity!

3

IT HAD been late on the afternoon of the 27th, less than a half-score hours before the breaking of that great terror upon the world, that young Ernest Ralton had sped away to the northeast in his plane, toward the barren little island retreat of Dr. Munson and his associates. It was not primarily to see Munson, of whom he stood in some awe, that Ralton had offered to make the trip, but to visit young Dr. Richard Mallett, his particular friend, whom he had not seen since the departure of the Munson party for the island some months before. The request of the Association had given him a valid excuse for making the trip, however, and so, slanting up above Manhattan's massed and sky-flung towers Ralton had circled once and then headed away into the gray haze northward.

Hour followed hour while the gray New England coast slid back like a great map beneath him, the sun sinking ever to the horizon westward as he roared on. Hardly conscious of more than the steady, even song of the motor and the rush of wind about him, Ralton checked his progress automatically by the natural features of the coast below him, and at last was flying northward over the tangle of deeply indented bays and islands that forms the Maine coast, veering outward from it over the gray waters to the east, and peering intently for Cone Island. The sun had dipped to the horizon, by then, but he knew

from Mallett's account that the island should be clearly discernible by reason of the gigantic squat cone of rock that rose from its level sands.

Dusk was dropping upon the world, though, and Ralton had become slightly anxious before he glimpsed it at last, a huge, dark, squat cone, its broad summit flattened as though by some giant hand, that seemed to rise directly out of the gray waters miles from the coast. It was with a feeling of some relief that he sent his plane circling down toward the place, and as it loomed larger beneath him in the failing light he scanned it closely. The island itself, he saw, was roughly circular, perhaps a dozen miles across, a barren, level stretch of sands from whose center the great squat cone of rock arose, a curious formation frequent on such islands and carved out by the wind-driven sands. The cone's steep sides of rock, almost vertical, could not be more than a few hundred feet in height, Ralton estimated, but its broad, flat summit was several times that in diameter. And now, as he wheeled down toward that summit, he saw that upon it were the laboratories of the men he sought, long, low buildings of white concrete grouped in a rough circle about the summit.

The circle enclosed by the buildings, though, save for some great looming object at the center which he could but vaguely make out, was clear and flat, and seemed to Ralton of sufficient extent to permit the landing of his little plane. Carefully wheeling again over the place, he spiraled slowly down toward it. Even through the dusk he could see that no human figures were visible beneath, though from one of the buildings came a white spark of light. Downward still he circled, therefore, until at last he was dipping gently into the open clearing at the summit's center, running along over its smooth rock surface for a few seconds and then coming to a stop just before one of the encircling buildings. A moment more and Ralton had clambered forth and stood gazing into the dusk about him.

It was apparent that his coming had not yet been noticed, since he had cut off the plane's motor high above, and no one had yet emerged from the buildings about him. He glanced around them uncertainly, then started across the open clearing toward one at the opposite side, from whose door and windows came the white light he had glimpsed from above. Half-way across the clearing, though, he slowed, came to a stop. He had halted before the great object at its center which he had but vaguely glimpsed from above, but which now, looming a few feet before him, was so extraordinary in appearance as to turn all his interest and attention upon it for the moment.

It was a great globe, a giant sphere of burnished metal fully fifty feet in diameter, resting upon a massive metal pedestal that had been sunk into the rock. From the top of the great globe a thin, needle-like rod of metal, tapering to a point, projected perpendicularly upward, while from the pedestal-base a network of connections ran to some two or three of the long, low buildings about the summit. From these buildings came the throbbing of unceasing mechanisms of some sort, but from the globe itself arose only a fine, incessant hum, hardly to be heard, though giving to Ralton in some way an impression of terrific power. At the point where the myriad black-covered connections ran into the globe's base there rose beside it, on a tripod of metal standards, a box-like black-gleaming object upon whose face were set a dozen or more glass-fronted dials, their needles trembling with the power racing through them; a series of switches and automatic circuit-breakers; and a single bulbous black knob which moved up and down a vertical slot in the switchboard, apparently.

The sides of that slot, Ralton saw, were finely graduated, the knob-lever resting almost at its bottom. Near the slot's top small white letters inset beside it spelled "Ultra-Hertzian Vibrations." An inch or so beneath, beside the slot in similar lettering, was "Hertzian Vibrations." Beneath that, in turn, "Light Vibrations," "Heat Radiation Vibrations," "Radio-active (Gamma) Vibrations," then "Cosmic Ray Vibrations," at which the black switch-knob rested, and lowest of all a simple zero. Ralton stared at the thing in astonishment. It was the entire range of etheric vibrations that was lettered in order there before him, he knew, from highest to lowest, but for what reason? This great globe-mechanism, what could biologists be doing——

A cry from behind whirled him about, a cry of fierce rage from the door of the white-lit laboratory building beyond him. Framed in that doorway stood a massive-figured, gray-haired man, eyes burning and face contorted as he saw Ralton, while from the white-lit room behind him other figures were surging forward.

Ralton took a quick step toward them. "Dr. Munson!" he said, eagerly, advancing toward that massive figure, then stopped. For Munson and the others, with inarticulate cries of rage, had leapt forward toward him! He shrank instinctively back, heard the massive leader of the group crying, "Get him back—back from that condenser!" Then before his dazed understanding could credit what was happening the others were upon him, and flung him sidewise to the ground. Ralton, uncomprehending still but in an instinctive revulsion of antagonism, struck fiercely out at them, felt one or two give back before his blows, strove to struggle up to his feet. Then he heard another commanding shout from Munson, in the background; something hard crashed down upon his head and sent blinding light through his brain, and he knew no more.

Consciousness, when it finally came back to him, informed him first of two things, that his head was aching violently, and that he was lying on some hard surface in a dark and quiet place. He stirred a little, opened his eyes. It was a corner of a bare and empty concrete-walled room that he lay in, a dim radiance of starlight coming in through two barred windows in its walls. Then, as he strove to sit erect, he glimpsed a dark figure gazing outward through one of those windows, a figure that turned at his sound of movement and came swiftly across the room toward him, crouching down beside him and supporting him. Even in the dimness of the room and through his dazed senses Ralton recognized the other, and he gasped at sight of him.

"Mallett!" he whispered. "Good God, Mallett—what has happened here?"

The other's voice was high and strange. "Steady, Ralton," he told him. "You've come into the heart of a hell, here—and Munson and the rest the fiends."

"But what are they doing—Munson and the others?" Ralton asked dazedly. "I came up here in my plane—hours ago, it seems—to bring a message to Munson——"

And briefly he told Mallett of the phenomenon of the protoplasm deposits that had brought him north to the island.

Mallett listened, silently, broodingly. "That protoplasmic slime," he said, finally, "you knew of it, the world knew of it, but who knew what lay behind it, what was to come of it, what has already come of it?"

The face of Ralton expressed his bewilderment, and the other lifted him suddenly to his feet, toward one of the metal-barred little windows at the room's corner.

"Down there, Ralton," he said, pointing downward and outward into the starlit night. "That is what has come—what is coming—out of the thing, in these last hours that you've lain here unconscious. That is what is coming now over all the world."

Ralton stared downward, uncomprehendingly. The building of which the room was a part was located at the very edge of the great cone's summit, and from that window he could look far across the level sands of the little island, lying pale beneath the dim starlight, away to the foam-fringed line of the shore. Up and out from the shore now, though, he discerned what seemed a mighty glistening gray wave creeping in over the level sands, a thick, gleaming, jelly-like mass rolling in toward the central cone. He turned toward Mallett, deeper bewilderment on his countenance.

"That great gray wave, Mallett!" he exclaimed. "It can't be——"

"Protoplasm?" the other said. "Protoplasm like that found on the world's beaches? But it is, Ralton, a great wave of living protoplasm, rolling out of all earth's seas in a great tide of death across the earth! *And Munson and the others outside are the ones who have loosed it on the world!*"

Ralton felt his already dazed brain turning at the other's words, but before his stunned astonishment could find expression Mallett had gripped his shoulder, was crouching again with him in the room's corner, speaking on.

"You know, Ralton, how Dr. Munson and the other four of us came up here to Cone Island, hardly more than a half-dozen months ago. Surely a strangely variegated assortment of scientists we must have seemed for a biologist to take with him. Labreau, the bio-chemist; Kingsford, the electrical expert; Kramer, the bio-physicist; and I, the cytologist, the cell-specialist; a strange enough quintet we were, but one whose combined knowledge one would think could solve any scientific problem. And it was for that purpose that Dr. Munson had assembled us. He wished to solve a problem, one that is indeed and always has been the greatest of all scientific problems. And that problem was the origin of life itself.

"How did life first originate upon this earth? That is a question to which biology, the science of life, can answer nothing. We know that once the earth was a fiery furnace in which no life could exist, and that somehow after its cooling there rose in its primeval seas the first life, protoplasm, the basic life-stuff of which all earth's living creatures are built, from which all have come on the road of evolution. Protoplasm arose, somehow, from the elements of sea-silt, its complex compounds formed by some strange force out of those elements. What force it was that had driven the process on, that had caused the formation of those first great masses of protoplasm in earth's seas, no biologist has ever been able to say. But Munson believed that he could discover that force and prove his discovery, and when he outlined his plan to us we leapt at the chance. He had fixed upon this island, Cone Island, as the place for our researches, both because of the seclusion we desired and for another reason he disclosed later; so gathering all the equipment and supplies we would need we came here.

"It was in a tug chartered at Boston that we came, bringing with us workmen and supplies for the erection of these laboratory buildings. At Dr. Munson's direction they were built here upon the great cone's summit, though so steep are the rock sides that only by means of metal ladders set in the rock could we ascend and descend from the sands below. The greater part of our time, however, we planned to spend up here, and so the buildings were run up here and all of our great cases of equip-

ment and supplies swung up. Then, with the leaving of the tug, we put our equipment in order and began our work, on the plan that Dr. Munson had outlined to us.

"It was Dr. Munson's belief that the change from the inorganic element of sea-silt into the organic, living compounds of protoplasm had been accomplished by the driving force of certain etheric vibrations. You know, of course, that the chemical combinations of elements are profoundly affected in myriad ways by such vibrations. The vibrations of radiant heat, for instance, will break many compounds down into their original elements, or build up new ones. Those of light will affect others in the same way, and as Professor Baly of Liverpool showed in his famous experiments, are responsible more or less for the change from inorganic to organic living matter in the case of plants. Electro-magnetic, that is Hertzian or radio vibrations, can affect the very atomic structure of certain metals. Radio-active or gamma vibrations have a profound power of disintegrating or breaking down the great majority of chemical compounds. All these we tested, but in none of them did we find the vibration whose force would cause the building up of protoplasm's organic compounds from the sea-silt inorganic elements. It was only when we tried the last remaining etheric vibration known, the most recently discovered of all, the cosmic ray vibrations, that we succeeded at last.

"You know, Ralton, that the cosmic ray vibrations are the shortest in wave length of all the etheric vibrations, ranking just below the radio-active waves. First comprehensively studied but a few years ago by Dr. Millikan, the cosmic rays have been found to permeate all space, shot forth from the white-hot furnaces of stars just as heat-vibrations and light-vibrations are shot forth. And it was the cosmic ray vibrations, we found, that had in past ages built up the organic compounds of living protoplasm from inorganic elements of sea-silt. To prove that, we had devised a mechanism, or rather it had been devised by Kingsford and Krauner, which condensed and concentrated any etheric vibration. It was a small globe-condenser, and when set to the correct wave-length would attract and concentrate all vibrations of that wave-length for a great space around it. If we set it to the wave-length of Hertzian vibrations, for instance, it attracted and condensed them into a concentrated ray; the same with radio-active vibrations; the same with cosmic ray vibrations. And it was this we used to produce a concentrated shaft of the cosmic ray vibrations, turning it upon a container of sea-silt and sea-water from the island's beach. In the remote past, we reasoned, the cosmic ray at its natural intensity had during long ages formed protoplasm out of the sea's elements. Now, using a cosmic vibration millions of times concentrated by the condenser, the process should take but a proportionate time, should require but days instead of ages.

"We succeeded, Ralton! Almost at once the sea-silt in the container began to change beneath the concentrated vibrations, giving forth a thin, clear slime that gradually began to show signs of life, of movement. But a day or two it had taken that slime to form from the sea-silt, and in another day or two it was no longer slime but living protoplasm, a mass of it there in the container. And when it had developed under the concentrated vibrations to a certain stage of life, of power, it began to flow from the container, moving blindly out of it in search of food, a mindless thing of protoplasm that we had created out of inorganic matter! By concentrating the cosmic ray vibrations we had done within days what had required eons in the past!

"Upon that protoplasm mass we experimented for days. We found that just as the cosmic ray vibrations could build its complex compounds up from the sea's elements, so could the radio-active vibrations disintegrate it, break its compounds down again into those elements. When we turned with our condenser a concentrated radio-active vibration upon the mass of protoplasm it crumbled and shriveled away almost instantly into gray powder, its original elements lying before us in the form of that powder. The radio-active vibrations, indeed, when concentrated, could disintegrate the protoplasm in a moment, whereas it required days for the cosmic ray vibrations to build it up, and this greater power we held to be due to the greater wave-length of the radio-active impulses. We saw, too, that that accounted for the fact that during the ages no great masses of protoplasm had been built up by the cosmic rays, since the radio-active vibrations counteracted them enough to prevent the forming of such masses.

"We had succeeded, and I was eager to return to the world with our success, but Dr. Munson refused! The long, intense work of years that he had gone through, the superhuman eagerness with which he had sought this success, the killing strain of our toil for it—all these I think had unhinged his brain, had changed him into a monomaniac, and the other three with him. 'We five are the masters of life!' he told us. 'We have done what only gods were ever thought to do, have created life from the non-living! We can, by building a greater condenser, concentrate the cosmic ray vibrations from a vast part of space on earth, and cause protoplasm floods to form in all earth's seas in giant masses, protoplasm masses that will inevitably, when they reach a certain development of life and power, sweep out over earth in blind movement and search of food, wiping out forever all the botches of flesh that make up humanity! Then we can destroy all those protoplasm floods in a moment by switching the condenser to the radio-active vibrations, and can people the world with the forms of life that we think best, can people it with beings over whom we shall reign supreme — the life-masters—the creators—the gods!'

"The thing was madness, madness the more terrible because we could actually do the thing, and I recoiled in horror. The other three, though, driven on by the strange craziness of soul, the monomania, that filled Munson, like him regarded themselves as gods, as life-masters, and agreed to his mad plan. Before I could more than protest, before I could even attempt escape from the island, they had seized me, had prisoned me in this empty storeroom, guarding its windows with metal bars and assuring me that I was only preserved until they might need me for further experimentation. They were mad, Munson and the others, yet it was even to me an explicable madness, for I too had felt the same terrific pride as they at the thought that we had actually created life from the non-living, and that terrific pride it was that had driven them now on their evil plan to become life-masters of all the world.

"Swiftly then they went about their work, building up a great condenser many times larger than our small one but similar in design, a great globe-condenser that stands in the center of the clearing there and that took them weeks to complete. Through one of my windows here I watched it growing beneath their hands, while night and day, four burning-eyed madmen, they labored upon it, driven on by Munson's mad purpose of soul. At last, days ago, it was completed, and at once they put it into operation. The great knob-switch, on its switch-board, regulated the wave length of the etheric vibration it attracted and condensed, I could see. While at the bot-

tom, or at zero, it attracted no vibration, was not in operation. Moved up to the wave-length of the cosmic ray vibrations it attracted those vibrations, drawing them inward from a tremendous region of space to concentrate them in a great sheath of intensified vibrations upon all the earth, penetrating through all its seas.

"Already in those seas, I knew, the cosmic ray vibrations, millions of times intensified, would be beginning their work, would be forming great masses of protoplasm in inconceivable quantities out of the inorganic sea-silt's elements. Days more would loose those gigantic tides of death upon the earth, I knew, when they had been developed by the rays to a certain stage, and I raged with despair in my prison while outside the four exultantly watched their work. Striving to escape from my prison, knowing that if I could but smash or turn off the great condenser I might yet prevent the loosing of those protoplasm floods, I worked desperately with the bars of one of my windows. They had been hastily set into the concrete wall with cement, and now with odd bits of metal left to me I chipped and scratched at that cement, endeavoring to loosen one of the bars. But I could do little with it, and one by one the days passed, until I knew that today would see the protoplasm tides rolling out upon earth, knew that by then they would have reached a stage of development and life to enable them to do so.

"The four outside—Munson and the others—knew, too, for I saw them exultant, and so, hours ago, I gave up in utter despair my work at the bar, lapsing into sleep from which I was aroused by an uproar in the clearing. I saw then that you had come to this island of hell unheeding, and that the four madmen outside had seen you at the condenser, had with mad fury at the thought of harm to their work knocked you senseless, thrusting you in here with me. And now, in these hours that you have lain unconscious, I could see the work of Munson and the others coming at last to its completion, could see in the starlight, as you have seen, the first protoplasm floods rolling out from the sea onto the island's sands. They can not reach the great cone's summit, of course, since Munson had our laboratories built upon the summit so that any work we desired could be carried out unhampered on the sands below. But they are not only pouring out over this island, they are pouring out over the shores of all earth's seas, while we talk here, through the great cities and over all the lands of earth. They will roll on, new gigantic tides of protoplasm formed unceasingly by that great condenser outside and loosed upon earth, until Munson and the others have swept man and all the races of men from earth, until the protoplasm tides themselves have been destroyed by them and there is left a lifeless world over which the life-masters shall rule supreme!"

4

RALTON sat unmoving, unspeaking, when the whisper of Mallett's voice had ceased. The other had risen, and he felt himself swaying to his feet, looking strangely about the little room, and then into his friend's tense eyes. No sound save the fine, half-heard hum of the great globe in the clearing broke the stillness of the great cone's summit, and as the two stood there it seemed to Ralton that that stillness, that silence, had suddenly become thunderous in his ears.

"Protoplasm," he heard himself saying. "The whole world——"

And then as swift pictures rose in his whirling brain the reality of it all came sharply and abruptly to him. "Mallett!" he cried, in a half whisper. "If I had known when I stood at that condenser-control!"

Mallett's eyes were suddenly eager. "But if there's still a chance!" he

was muttering. "Even now—if the two of us could get out of here——"

He turned swiftly toward the windows, Ralton beside him. Through the narrow, barred opening of one of them, gazing downward they could see vast masses of the gray, glistening protoplasm towering upward against the great cone's steep, smooth sides of rock, rolling upward and falling back in vain endeavor to flow up over the sides and summit of the cone as they had done over the rest of the island, in their blind, mindless search for food.

Mallett gestured swiftly toward those upward-striving masses.

"They can't flow up the cone's steep sides," he said. "Munson knew it when he loosed them on the world. But turning off the condenser now will not destroy those protoplasm masses, nor those over all the world."

"But how——?" Ralton began, to be interrupted by the other.

"Our only chance is to switch the condenser's control," he told him swiftly, "to turn it from the cosmic ray vibration wave-length to the radio-active vibration wave-length. Then instead of attracting and concentrating the cosmic ray vibrations on all earth it would do so with radio-active vibrations and would disintegrate and destroy the protoplasm instantly."

They had turned toward the other window, the one that gave upon the clearing, and gazing through it into the open space they could see that no one moved in it, could hear faintly the voices of Munson and the others, and the occasional tap of tools, from the white-lit laboratory building to the right, which was out of their line of vision. Open and unprotected lay the great condenser at the clearing's center, its vast globe gleaming dully, its glass-faced dials on the black switch-box reflecting the starlight faintly. As they watched, one of those from the laboratory, a dark, intent figure that Ralton recognized as Kingsford, the electrical expert, approached the box, inspected the dials, and then as though satisfied turned back to the laboratory building from which he had come, and from which in another moment they could make out his voice again. Mallett turned swiftly toward his friend.

"They're busy on something," he said, excitedly, "and if ever we're to try for a break now is the time."

Swiftly he produced from his pockets a few odd bits of metal that he had rudely sharpened upon the room's concrete sides, and with these the two began the slow digging and scratching at the cement at the base of one of the bars which was their single chance for freedom. It seemed to Ralton that though they worked madly at the painful task they were making no impression upon the hard cement, in which Mallett had during the past days made some shallow cuts, but still they toiled on at it, hands bruised and bleeding, while the great condenser in the clearing hummed on, and the star-groups above wheeled slowly down toward the west with the near approach of dawn.

In the time that followed, a time that seemed unending to Ralton's dulled senses, they were mocked by the unyieldingness of the cement upon which they worked, and only by continued toil could they make even shallow scratches upon the rough cement. Around the bar's base, silently and unceasingly, though, they worked, hands bloody now, while there came still the occasional murmur of voices from the laboratory building to the right which they could not see. In the clearing the great condenser lay unprotected as ever, but as they worked on it seemed that they were no nearer freedom, and now a gray tinge of light in the dark skies above was bespeaking the coming of dawn. Once, from the window, Ralton glimpsed the gleaming masses at the great cone's base, still surging upward, and saw

that they had managed to gain a hold half-way up its steep sides and were vainly and blindly striving to pour still farther upward.

It was not those glistening floods on the barren island below, however, that were central in the thoughts of Mallett and Ralton as they worked on at the bar, bloody and blind with sweat, all but exhausted; it was those other gigantic floods that both knew were even then sweeping over coasts and islands, engulfing the peoples of earth as they rolled on. Neither spoke of that; neither spoke at all as they labored on with all their waning force at the stubborn bar, but the thought was as though visible between them, spurring all their strength into their efforts. And at last, when the dawn-light was strengthening swiftly eastward, they had scratched away the cement from one side of the bar's base, and straightened up, all but exhausted.

"It's all we can do!" panted Mallett. "Our only chance is to get the bar out now—if we wait longer it'll be broad day."

The two paused a moment, then gripped the bar, braced themselves against the concrete wall, and put all the strength of their muscles into a great pull inward. Ralton heard the muscles of himself and his friend cracking beneath the strain, and closing his eyes with the agony of that effort, felt the bar stir a little in their grip. But when they straightened, inspected it quickly, they found that hardly had they loosened it. Again they gripped it, again threw all their strength into a mighty pull, and this time felt it give perceptibly in its socket. Neither could speak, for the moment, and Ralton saw his friend breathing in great gasps, as he was also; but only for a moment they paused, then gripped the bar again. Another tremendous effort—a giving of the bar—and then, with a harsh, shrill squealing of the iron against the cement, it had come out completely from its socket.

For the moment the two leaned motionless against the wall, breathless and exhausted but listening with pounding hearts to ascertain whether that last shrill squeal of the bar had given the alarm to Munson and the others. The faint voices from the laboratory, they noted, had apparently ceased, but there was no sound of alarm, and no one appeared in the clearing or within sight of their prison-room. Then, after that moment's pause, Mallett had pulled himself upward, was squeezing through the window between bar and wall, and in a moment Ralton had followed him. Crouched on the ground beneath the window, the gray light of dawn growing over the cone's summit, Mallett pointed across the open clearing to where stood the mighty globe-condenser and its unprotected switch control.

"The control!" Mallett was whispering thickly. "If we can get to it——!"

They stepped forward, stealthily, silently. No sound came from any part of the cone's summit, save for the great condenser's half-heard hum. Another step—another. Slowly, carefully they crept on, out from the shelter of their prison and the long building beside it, into the great circular clearing. Ralton's blood was pounding through his veins, for now the gleaming condenser lay but a few hundred feet ahead, at the clearing's center. Should he make a rush for it and trust to chance to get him to the condenser's control in time? He discarded the idea, even as Mallett and he crept forward; for within moments more their stealthy, silent progress would bring them to their goal. Within moments more——

"Your strategy, Mallett, is somewhat infantile, I fear!"

Munson's voice! Cool and mocking, it cut like a sword through their whirling thoughts and the two spun about, then recoiled. Out from the open door of one of the buildings behind them had stepped the massive,

coldly smiling scientist, a heavy automatic in his grasp turned upon them. From between the other buildings, to right and to left of the clearing, had stepped the other three—Labreau, Kingsford, Krauner—their own pistols trained upon the two. Still hundreds of feet from the condenser, Ralton knew, with finality, in that moment, that never could they make it, never could they reach it with the steel-nosed bullets of four guns tearing through their bodies. That noise the bar had made had roused the four, had brought them pistols in hand to watch mockingly the two before them. The gray-haired, mocking-eyed Munson; the dark face of Labreau, contorted with insane rage; the gloating Kingsford, his strong, intellectual face twisted now as though by some devil's hand; the coldly indifferent countenance of the blond-haired Krauner, whose eyes yet burned madly behind his gleaming glasses — all these faces appeared to be slowly turning about Ralton in that seemingly eternal moment.

Munson's voice came to his ears again. "It has been something of a comedy to watch your clumsy progress," he mocked them, "though unfortunately we can not allow you, of course, to proceed any farther." His voice rose suddenly, the cords of his neck swelling with fury as all amusement left him. "You fools! You try to wreck the greatest scientific experiment ever conducted on this earth; try to save a humanity, a race, as trivial as yourselves from the doom which we, the masters of life, have decreed for them; try to make impossible the new races which we life-masters shall give earth when the protoplasm floods have swept all other life away!"

Then, as abruptly as that burst of insane fury had blazed up it calmed, and the mocking gleam returned to his eyes. "Humanity is passing, even now," he told them, "and as for you two—I think it best that you pass with it——"

Ralton saw his pistol raised a little to bear full upon them, saw in that infinitesimal instant the guns of the others upon them as their hands tensed about their grips, their fingers about the triggers. In that flashing instant it seemed to him that those black muzzles had become, somehow, mighty round dark doorways down which he and all the world were thundering to their doom. It was the end, for him as for the world. The whole scene seemed withdrawn suddenly to a great distance, made suddenly remote, in that instant before death leapt upon them. It was the——

There was a sudden wild scream from Munson, wild shrieks from the others, and Ralton came back to complete reality to see that the madmen were rushing wildly toward great gray glistening masses of jelly-like stuff that had flowed suddenly up over those edges, and were gliding swiftly over it!

The protoplasm masses below were pouring up onto the summit!

RALTON and Mallett swayed there, stunned, transfixed; saw Munson and the others fling themselves insanely upon the forward-gliding masses; saw those masses tower up suddenly beneath that mad, fierce attack and then crash down upon the struggling men, burying them in their glistening folds; saw the insane struggle of the four ceasing abruptly in swift suffocation, saw those masses leaping glidingly forward toward themselves, great glistening arms forming and looping out toward them!

It was that which broke the spell for the two, and they flung themselves toward the great condenser, still yards away, hurled themselves toward the control, the great arms looping toward the staggering two. Ralton heard a cry from Mallett, felt him jerked back from his side by one of those arms, but did not look back even in that instant, flinging himself madly on toward the control. He was within a

dozen feet of it, a half-dozen—was almost within reach of it—and then another great glistening arm had looped lightning-like from the masses behind and had caught and held him in its cold grip, while upon him and upon Mallett swept the gleaming floods from which those arms had shot out!

Ralton felt that cold, terrific grip about him, pulling him backward, the shining masses behind gliding swiftly upon him, and as they did so he put his last strength into one supreme effort, straining with a final mad burst of strength toward the control-knob just before him. Beneath that superhuman effort the relentless grip that held him relaxed a little for an instant, and in that instant Ralston's forward-straining fingers had just touched the control-knob, had flicked it sharply upward from the white letters at which it stood to those just above, from the cosmic ray vibrations to those of the radio-active vibrations.

The next instant it seemed to him that over all the world there lay a sudden, tremendous stillness, a complete and utter cessation of all movement and sound, as the grip that held him, the gray masses that had been rushing forward upon him and upon Mallett paused, halted, hesitated. Then, as he swayed there, he felt the grip relax and disappear, saw dazedly that the translucent arm about him had changed oddly, had shriveled suddenly, crumbled into a smear of gray powder that fell to the ground! And the mighty masses behind him, the great tides of protoplasm on the cone's summit and sides, and those he could see out over the island's level sands far below, all had crumbled, too, disintegrated in that same moment, and where they had been was but a thick coating of fine gray powder! Gray powder in the coating of which behind them lay the dark, twisted bodies of Munson and the others! Gray powder that lay, he knew, over all earth where the protoplasm masses had been but a moment before, that lay in city and on land, the sole remaining evidence of the gigantic masses which the great condenser with its concentrated cosmic rays had built up over all earth and which with its concentrated radio-active rays it had in the same way destroyed! Gray powder, that alone remained of the greatest and most terrible menace ever to challenge the existence of man and the world of man!

Ralton staggered to Mallett's side, half led and half dragged his friend, still dazed, toward his plane that stood still untouched at the clearing's other side. Into its front cockpit he helped him, turned a switch and whirled the propeller. Another moment, and with motor roaring the little plane was speeding across the clearing, lifting sharply upward into the growing light of dawn, speeding away from the giant cone and island, over the gray waters toward the south.

South—south—Ralton, with hands on the controls and with head thrown weakly back, let the plane find its own track through the upper air as it roared on. Swaying drunkenly, it flashed southward high above the clean gray sea, with the clean salt air rushing cold against his face and that of Mallett before him. And still toward the south he raced, with the gray light of dawn to his left changing to gold as the rising sun lifted above the horizon. South—south——

The world ahead of him, which had been saved from doom at the last, not by Mallett and him but by fate, was not in Ralton's thoughts as he thundered on. Nor were the explanations of that doom and that escape which only they could give to rejoicing humanity. He wanted only, in that moment, to race farther and farther from the island of hell that was dwindling in the waters far behind them; wanted only to speed farther and farther from

the dark, gigantic cone upon the gray-strewn summit of which there lay the twisted bodies of the men who had planned to be the life-masters of the world, and whose plans had reaped but death.

Dead Man's Hate

By ROBERT E. HOWARD

They hanged John Farrel in the dawn amid the market-place;
At dusk came Adam Brand to him and spat upon his face.
"Ho, neighbors all," spake Adam Brand, "see ye John Farrel's fate!
'Tis proven here a hempen noose is stronger than man's hate!

"For heard ye not John Farrel's vow to be avenged on me
Come life or death? See how he hangs high on the gallows tree!"
Yet never a word the people spake, in fear and wild surprize—
For the grisly corpse raised up its head and stared with sightless eyes,

And with strange motions, slow and stiff, pointed at Adam Brand
And clambered down the gibbet tree, the noose within its hand.
With gaping mouth stood Adam Brand like a statue carved of stone,
Till the dead man laid a clammy hand hard on his shoulder-bone.

Then Adam shrieked like a soul in hell; the red blood left his face
And he reeled away in a drunken run through the screaming market-place;
And close behind, the dead man came with face like a mummy's mask,
And the dead joints cracked and the stiff legs creaked with their unwonted task.

Men fled before the flying twain or shrank with bated breath,
And they saw on the face of Adam Brand the seal set there by death.
He reeled on buckling legs that failed, yet on and on he fled;
So through the shuddering market-place, the dying fled the dead.

At the riverside fell Adam Brand with a scream that rent the skies;
Across him fell John Farrel's corpse, nor ever the twain did rise.
There was no wound on Adam Brand but his brow was cold and damp,
For the fear of death had blown out his life as a witch blows out a lamp.

His lips were writhed in a horrid grin like a fiend's on Satan's coals,
And the men that looked on his face that day, his stare still haunts their souls.
Such was the doom of Adam Brand, a strange, unearthly fate;
For stronger than death or hempen noose are the fires of a dead man's hate.

The MURDERER

by Murray Leinster

"A huge pet cat made playful pounces at his trousers."

THE murderer's hair lifted at the back of his neck. A crawling sensation spread down his spine. There was something moving in the room! It was pitch-dark, with vague rectangles of faint grayishness where windows opened upon the rainy night outside. The murderer had left this room half an hour before, maybe only twenty minutes before. He'd gone plunging away through the darkness, knowing that before dawn the rain would have washed away the tire-tracks of his car. And then he'd remembered something. He'd come back to pick up a thing he'd left, the only thing that could possibly throw suspicion upon him. And there was something moving in the room!

His scalp crawled horribly. He had to clench his teeth to keep them from chattering audibly. . . . He heard the sound again! Something alive in the room. Something furtive and horrible and—and terribly playful! It was amused, that live thing in the room. It was diverted by the one gasp of pure terror he had given at the first sound it made.

The murderer stood teetering upon his toes, with his hand outstretched and touching the wall, fighting against an unnamable fear. He was in the right house, certainly. And in the right room. He could catch the faint acrid reek of burnt smokeless powder. His senses were uncannily acute. He could even distinguish the staling scent of the cigarette he had lighted when he was here before. . . . This was the room in which he had killed a man. Yonder, by the wide blotch of formless gray, there was a chair, and in that chair there was an old man, huddled up, with a bullet-wound in his throat and a spurt of deepening crimson overlaying his shirt-front. The murderer who stood by the wall, sick with fear, had killed him no more than half an hour before.

And there could not be anyone else in the house. The murderer listened, stifling his breathing to deepen the silence. Nothing but the shrill and senseless singing of a canary-bird that was one of the dead man's two pets. The bird stopped, began again drowsily, and was silent. In the utter stillness that followed, the vastly muffled purring of his own motor-car reached the murderer, and the slow, drizzling sound of rain, even the curious humming of the telephone wires that led away from the house.

But then he heard the noise again, such a sound as might have been made by a man drumming softly and meditatively upon a table with his finger-tips. A tiny sound, an infinitely tiny sound, but the sound of something alive. The murderer stifled a gasp. It came from the chair where the dead man was sitting!

There was cold sweat upon the forehead of the man by the wall. It seemed, insanely, as if the dead figure, sitting upright in its chair, had opened its eyes to stare at him through the blackness, while the stiff fingers tapped upon the table-cloth as they had done in life.

A surge of despairing hatred came to the murderer, while icy-cold crawlings went down his spine. Those finger-tappings . . . those furtive, stingy fingers that were always so restless, always touching something, always fumbling desirously at something. . . . Why, he'd shot the old man when he was fumbling with his cigarette-case, avidly plucking out a cigarette to smoke in secret, being too miserly to buy even the cheapest of tobacco for himself.

The murderer felt some of his fear vanish. He'd shot the old man. Killed him. He was dead. He'd made only one mistake. He'd made sure the bullet went just where he intended, and then he'd fled, out to the car and plunged away. No need to stop and rob. The dead man was the murderer's uncle, and the state and the courts would deliver his wealth in time. Everything was all right, except for one mistake, and he'd come back to rectify that.

He deliberately fanned the hatred that had helped so much in the commission of his crime, and now was crowding out his terror. He had only to think of the old man to grow furious. Rich—and a miser. Old—and a skinflint. He wouldn't keep a servant, because servants cost money. He wouldn't keep a watch-dog, because watch-dogs had to be fed. It was typical of him that he kept two pets as an economical jest—a canary because it would eat bread-crumbs, and a cat because it would feed itself. The murderer by the wall had seen the old man chuckling at sight of the huge cat stalking a robin upon the lawn. . . .

THE murderer moved forward confidently, now. He'd shot his uncle as the old man was fumbling cigarettes out of the nephew's case. He'd made sure that death had come, and he'd fled—but without the cigarette-case. Now he'd come back for it. It had been foolish of him to feel afraid. . . .

He heard the drumming of reflective finger-tips upon the table-top. Stark terror swept over him again, and he pressed on the button of his flashlight. . . . The old, unprepossessing figure was outlined in full. Grayed, unkempt hair, bushy eyebrows, head bent down, hand extended toward the cigarette-case on the table. . . . All was as it should have been. But the coat, the long, dingy coat that hung down from the extended arm—that was moving! Muscles in the sleeve had been flexing and unflexing. The coat was flapping back and forth. The man in the chair was alive!

With a snarl, the murderer sprang forward, his hands outstretched. An instant later he fell back with a rattle in his throat. The flesh he had touched was cold and already rigid.

He stood still, fighting down an impulse to scream. The man in the chair was dead. And then he heard that insane, deliberate tapping again. He could feel the dead eyes upon him, gazing up from a bent-forward head and looking through the bushy brows. A strange, malevolent joy was possessing the dead thing. It was gazing at him, tapping meditatively, while it debated a suitable revenge for its own death.

The murderer cursed hoarsely and groped for the table. He was livid with terror and a queer, helpless rage. He hated his victim, dead, as he had never hated him living. His fingers touched the cigarette-case—and it was jerked from beneath his touch.

The murderer choked. He had to have the cigarette-case. It was proof of his presence—proof against which his carefully prepared alibi would be of no use. He'd been seen to use it no more than an hour since, when he left the house in which he was a week-end guest to come hurtling across country for his murder. He had to have it!

And the tapping came again, insanely gleeful, diabolically reflective. The man in the chair was beyond reach. No more harm could come to him. And he could toy with the living man as a cat toys with a mouse.

Numb with unreasoning terror of the thing that was dead, and yet moved, that was not two yards away and yet was removed by all the gulf between the living and the dead, the murderer pressed the flashlight button again. He clenched his teeth as he seemed to sense the stoppage of a stealthy movement by the thing in the chair. His cigarette-case was gone, missing from the table.

The flashlight beam swept about the room in a last flare of common sense. It was empty. No one, nothing. . . . Nothing in the house except the dead man, to seize that one small article which would damn the murderer.

He remembered suddenly and switched off the light. There were neighbors. Not near neighbors, but people who would notice the glow of a flashlight if it met their eyes. They knew the old man for what he was, and probably whispered among themselves of buried treasure or hidden money. They would suspect a robber of like mind if they saw the flashlight going.

They might have noticed it then! He had to get the cigarette-case and go away quickly. . . .

Forcing his brain to function while he was stiff with a terror that he could not down, he masked the bulb with his fingers and let a little ray trickle over the table. The old, claw-like hand. It seemed to be nearer the telephone than it had been. The cloth table-top. No monogrammed case. It had been there. He had seen it not two minutes since. But it had vanished utterly.

The living man could have screamed with rage. He seemed to feel the thing in the chair shaking with silent laughter. The chair was shaking! God! It *was* shaking!

The murderer fled to the doorway upon caving knees, his whole soul writhing in panic. And then he heard the reassuring purring of his motor-car, waiting to carry him away. Outside was sanity. Only within was nightmarish horror. He could not go away and leave that case to hang him. . . .

He was grinding his teeth as he came back. He was doggedly desperate in his resolution. He got down on his hands and knees and let a little trickle of light slip between his fingers. Instinctively he kept out of reach of the dead fingers. Not yet had he come to think of danger there. The thing in the chair enraged him while it terrified him, because it mocked him. But he would get this one thing and go. . . .

The floor was bare. The case had not fallen from the table to the floor.

He let his light go out again, while his scalp crawled. But he could not go without the case. Leaving it, he left safety—perhaps life—behind. There was no single thing to connect him with this murder save that. His alibi was prepared, was perfect. But he had been seen to use that case an hour ago. Found here, it would damn him. If it were carried away, he would be unsuspected.

He had planned it perfectly. That was the only flaw in the whole plan, and he had only to pick up the monogrammed case of silver to be both safe and rich. Why, he'd even planned out the funeral! He would be dutifully grieved. Some of the neighbors would be there—some because it was the proper thing, but more from curiosity. The only person who would really regret the old man's death would be the telephone-girl. The old man paid her a small extra sum to give his line special attention. It was, he said, his burglar-protection. And every month, grudgingly, he paid her a small sum, with a deduction for each time he could claim to have been kept waiting for a number.

There was a scratching sound from the chair. The murderer sprang to his feet, his terror making his throat dry. The scratching came again, like a fingernail on rough-polished sheet metal. The telephone! The thing in the chair was reaching for the telephone!

The murderer acted without thought, in pure sweating fear. He sprang like a wildcat. The table toppled heavily to the floor and the telephone went spinning against the wall. He flung the extended wrist aside. . . .

It resisted his hand. And he jerked away and stood moaning softly, in an ecstasy of fear and desperation.

Once more the feeling as if the thing in the chair were laughing, shaking in silent, ghastly laughter. The one thing that held the murderer in the room was the cigarette-case that could hang him. And the thing was tormenting him and shaking in horrible mirth. . . .

Long past the power to reason, the murderer brought forth all his willpower. It was really a conflict between two fears, a panic-stricken horror of the dead thing before him, and terror of a noose that awaited him. He flashed his light despairingly—and saw the cigarette-case.

It was projecting invitingly from the pocket of the thing in the chair. It had been on the table. It had been filched from beneath his descending hand. It was in the dead man's pocket, as if tucked there by stiff and clumsy fingers—or as if left projecting to lure him to a snatch. And the extended hand, with its clawing fingers outstretched, quivered a little as if with eagerness for him to make an attempt to get it.

He whimpered. It was trying to get him to reach for the case, invitingly in sight. But if he reached, he would be within the length of its arms. And they would move stiffly but very swiftly to seize him. . . .

He whimpered. He dared not go without that case. He dared not reach in his hand to seize it. He sobbed a little with pure terror. Then, glassy-eyed with horror, he swung his foot in a sudden, nervous kick. If he could kick the case from its insecure position, he could retrieve it from the floor. . . .

He was quivering. The kick failed. The thing remained motionless, but it seemed to him that it was tensing itself for a sudden effort. . . . The murderer wrung his hands. He kicked again, and sheer icy fear flowed through his veins as he felt the soft resistance of the cloth against his foot. But he missed.

He heard a curious little chuckling sound that could not possibly have come from anything but a human throat. It was a human voice. It was syllables, divided to form words, but

words in a strangled, distant, ghastly tone. . . .

Drenched in the sweat of undiluted horror, the murderer swung his foot a third time, desperately, with his eyes glassy and the breath whistling in his throat.

Then he screamed. . . .

The flashlight dropped to the floor. There was utter darkness. There was no noise for seconds save those chuckling sounds. They were louder, now. The murderer stood rigid, balanced upon one foot, his eyes terrible. He screamed again. Something had hold of his foot. Something grasped at his trouser-leg and tugged at it gently. Not strongly. Gently. But it was tugging. . . .

The murderer screamed and screamed, with his eyes the eyes of a man in the depths of hell. Not because his foot was caught, but because something was pulling him, weakly but inexorably, in furtive little tugs, toward the man in the chair—who was dead.

Then sharp nails sank in his flesh and the murderer broke away. He fell, and in falling his slipping foot crashed against the leg of the chair, and that turned over upon him. . . .

The telephone operator had been listening since the receiver was flung off its hook by the fall of the telephone. She had spoken several times, asking what was wanted, and the sound had issued from the receiver on the floor like—well—like the chuckle of a man amused in a horrible fashion. When she heard screaming, she sent men to investigate. And they found a dead man tumbled out of the chair in which he had died, and another man crawling about the room. The living man was crawling about on his hands and knees, his eyes wide and staring and terrified, while a huge pet cat made playful pounces at his trouser-leg, tugging at it, worrying it, pulling backward upon it. And whenever the cat pulled at the bit of cloth, the living man screamed in a sickly, terrified fashion.

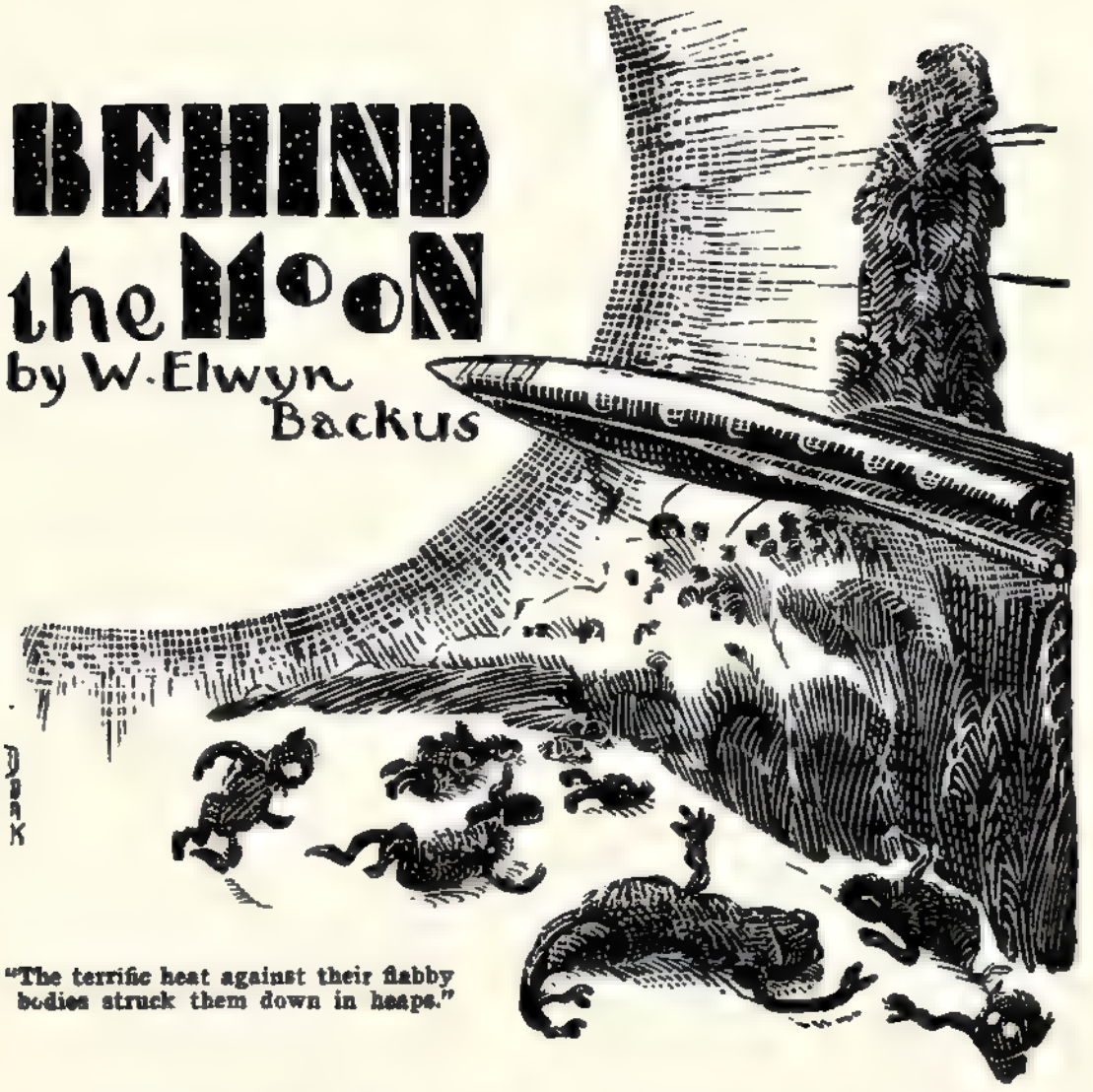
They never did get at the rights of the matter, but the coroner was somewhat annoyed by the cat, during the inquest. He was sitting in the chair the dead man had sat in, beside the table on which the telephone stood. And the cat buffeted his coat-tails, hanging down, with playful pats of its paws. The sound was very much like that of a man drumming softly and meditatively upon a table.

But it was not that which annoyed the coroner. He liked cats. What did annoy him was the fact that he had put his lighted cigarette on the edge of the table for an instant, and the cat sank its claws in the table-cover. With the jerk, the cigarette fell from the table into the coroner's pocket, and burned a hole through to the skin.

"If that cigarette had been in its case, now," said the coroner, smiling at his own feeble joke, "it wouldn't have done any harm."

BEHIND the Moon

by W. Elwyn Backus



"The terrific heat against their flabby bodies struck them down in heaps."

The Story Thus Far

The Rocket, a space-ship invented by Philip Carewe, takes off for the Moon, with the inventor, Donald Armstrong, John Sanderson, and a girl, Beryl Claverly, inside. The voyagers land their Rocket on the Moon, but are captured by the lunarites and held captives in the caves of the Moon. The lunarites are a hybrid race, and grow like mushrooms, dying in about seven years. They conceive the fantastic scheme of using Beryl to produce a new hybrid race, so that their offspring will no longer need to be planted in the mushroom beds to grow like fungi until they attain the power of independent movement.

CHAPTER 10

THE door-flap was whipped aside, and the excited features of Donald appeared before them. He halted, panting, then clutched Philip and dragged him to one side.

"Sanderson——" he choked, trying to keep his voice from carrying to Beryl, who stood alone, puzzled and wondering at Donald's actions. Should she insist on listening, or should she leave them to their undoubtedly sincere plans for her own safety?

"I caught up with the traitor and insisted—on accompanying," Donald husked. "He has been trying for some time to turn me against you, and I let him think—that perhaps I might after all swing into line with him, whatever his plans might be, for I wanted to find out just what deviltry he was up to.

"Anyway, he couldn't get rid of

This story began in WEIRD TALES for December

me. He beat it straight for Sarl—made him a proposition—for his and my benefit. I stayed just long enough to get the main details, then beat it back to warn you and Beryl. Seems these 'squashes' have been waiting merely to acclimate Beryl to this damnable charged atmosphere down here. Then those bolted doors would be opened—to her only! A transfusion of blood — the best specimens those growing beds offered——"

"Stop!" Philip cried, his voice hoarse with the stark horror of it.

He saw it all now. Those great, bolted doors were but the portals of larger, vaster caverns like those that he and Donald had glimpsed inside during their brief stay in the small and unimportant one where they had been placed to hasten their recovery, and which place they had, curiously enough, not found since.

What to do? They must not stand idly discussing this thing. Action—they must *do* something—and at once. But what? He cudgeled his brain, groping frantically for some plan, some practical chance of escape for Beryl from the power of these fiends aided by the traitorous Sanderson.

"Oh!" the girl burst out suddenly, stamping a small foot wrathfully. Donald's voice, growing louder in his excitement, had carried to her in spite of his caution. "The beast! Because I—rebuffed him, he takes this means of revenge, and of safety for himself."

So *that* was what was primarily behind Sanderson's sudden move, thought Philip, a curtain of crimson dropping before his eyes. A maddened brain began to function rapidly. How fortunate it was, after all, that Sanderson had not been left his gun by the lunarites! Now he could not use it against his own companions. But hold. Would not his new allies return it to him—both it and Donald's automatic—to help subdue them? Unless a ruse was feared by the lunarites. The chances were, however, that they would turn over to Sanderson at least one of those weapons.

"Hurry," Philip rapped out suddenly. "Our only chance is to break through the scattered populace to the one outlet that we know of. We might be able to find our way to the outside, before Sarl's crowd arrives. Grab only what you can't do without and come on."

A few seconds later they dashed out into the midst of the gaping lunarites that happened to be about at the time. Striking off at a tangent from the route by which Sarl and Sanderson would approach from the former's headquarters, Philip led the way down the checkerboard streets as rapidly as Beryl could follow. To their surprize and relief, for once they were not followed by their usual "escorts," which for some unknown but happy reason were not to be seen.

Fast as they ran, however, the thin cries of the lunarites carried faster. Each minute saw greater masses of the gray people obstructing their way, not intentionally, but through curiosity. For, to protect Beryl from their identification and desire under stress of the excitement of the flight and probable pursuit, he had made her tuck her unbobbed hair under his cap, which she wore with his coat. She already had on khaki breeches and puttees, which she had worn from the Rocket.

At last they found themselves all but halted, hemmed in by the milling, curious throngs. And now, from behind, came a sound that made Philip's heart sink—a definite sound of pursuit. Only the dense crowds in the narrow streets behind them would hinder the pursuers, delaying their arrival a few minutes longer. He looked at Beryl.

"I have it safe," she said, in answer to his unvoiced question, pressing a hard bulge in her coat pocket.

No use to push longer against the packed gray bodies that ringed them.

No use to bully or threaten them either, for the lunarites in front could not have moved out of the way had they willed. They surged closer and tighter about the trio each moment—while all the time the cries of pursuit drew nearer.

A last hope came to Philip—an idea that, no matter how slim its chance for success, must suffice for lack of any other apparent possibility of escape.

"Stick close together, gang," he said, slipping an arm protectively about Beryl.

"Righto," agreed Donald, facing the opposite direction, with his back against Philip's, so that he could guard against any surprize attack from the rear.

THE pursuing party was less than fifty yards away now. Philip caught a glimpse of Sanderson bringing up the rear, as if either ashamed or afraid of his treacherous part. Sarl led the pursuers. At last the crowd opened directly in front of them, the others about them pressing back in awe at the approach of their leader, thus leaving a fairly wide space. This was as Philip had hoped.

He waited in silence until the arrogant Sarl had approached to within a dozen feet. Then he suddenly pulled forth the automatic and pointed it directly at the tall lunarite.

At this unexpected move, Sarl halted abruptly. Until now it had been plain that he had feared not the slightest danger to himself with the thousands of his own subjects packed about them.

For an instant it looked as if he might turn and flee ignobly. Already he knew well the destructive force of these instruments, from that day by the Rocket. But he stood his ground and, turning his head, called to Sanderson to come forward.

The latter, still well behind Sarl, hesitated. Then a defiant look came over his face. He strode to the leader's side and faced the companions he had so basely betrayed. It was evident that he did not in the least relish the weapon now covering both him and Sarl.

"Command them to give up that weapon and accept our protection," said Sarl, addressing Sanderson.

"Drop it, Phil," advised the traitor. "They mean no harm to you."

"Like hell they don't, you damned traitor," yelled Donald, forgetful of his ministerial training, and pressing forward with inflamed contenance.

"Back, Don!" barked Phil. "I'm going to pot the first one of them that makes a false move. Sarl, either you clear a passage for us to the outside, or you die now. Think fast. And you, John Sanderson, will travel to hell along with him at the first new mistake you make—if they will receive either of you at that place!"

"I've got a gun of my own in my pocket—you can't bluff me," spat Sanderson.

"And you'll never get a chance to draw it, you yellow hound," Philip came back at him. "Start him to clearing a path for us through this crowd, or you'll be the first to go."

Sanderson's countenance blanched. He turned and spoke earnestly to Sarl in an undertone for a full minute. Then:

"All right. He says he'll do it. Hi, you rabble—get back out of the way there."

"Wait," barked Phil. "Toss that gun, butt first, to Donald. Careful now, how you get hold of it . . . there. Now, you, Sarl, walk up here in front of me—no monkeyshines—I can kill you any moment, and will if you don't do exactly what I tell you to do. . . . That's it. And you, Sanderson, do the same. Keep that gun jammed into his back, Don, and I'll do the same for our other friend here. Gang way, squashes! Tell 'em to open up better, Sarl, or it's your finish. Also tell that gang that came with you that if one of them tries to molest us,

they will be one leader short before they get a chance to do you any good."

Plainly the leader valued his brief life quite as much as earth-beings do their far longer ones, for he gave prompt and excitedly earnest instructions as Philip had directed. The crowd began to fall back sullenly but steadily, opening a narrow way ahead for them.

"Keep an eye on the rear, dear," said Philip aside to Beryl.

But she had anticipated him, and already had the following companions of Sarl covered with the automatic she carried.

"Here, that won't do," decided Philip. "We can't have you backing up all the way while Don and I walk comfortably. Jab that 'iron' against Sarl's spinal column while I bring up the rear."

The shift made, the curious group moved ahead slowly between the vast throngs of curious lunarites. It was apparent to Philip after a few minutes of tedious and almost imperceptible progress, that unless something else was done, they would never reach their goal. Calling a halt, he addressed the whispering group of dignitaries that followed him.

"Your leader's life depends upon our arriving safely on the outside surface of your world. Every surge of this multitude, every minute's delay, increases his peril. You, and you," he indicated, "go on ahead and disperse this crowd sufficiently in advance of us so that we can move on with greater freedom. And be sure to lead the way to the nearest exit, for Sarl's life will be forfeited at the first suspicion of treachery!"

Reluctantly the pair designated proceeded to follow out his command, pushing their way with difficulty through the wall of gray flesh. Presently they arrived at a point some hundred yards away, where one of them mounted on the shoulders of two lunarites and began to harangue the crowd in a rapid, indistinguishable jargon. Philip observed this proceeding anxiously, half expecting the throng to turn upon them immediately afterward in response to some exhorting from the dignitary, that these earth-beings be destroyed even at the sacrifice of their leader.

But this did not happen. Soon the multitude around the speaker began to thin out. True, those on the outskirts remained, but there was a sufficient loosening up to enable them to get through better than before.

The other dignitary went on still farther ahead and repeated the process. In this manner they gradually drew nearer to the closest exit to the outside of the satellite within whose crust they had been prisoners so long.

What the immediate future held for them, Philip did not attempt to surmise then. He knew that they could but make the best of their present meager advantage, and hope. Had any of them been able to look into the future, however, it is doubtful whether they would have had the courage to go on!

CHAPTER 11

For many minutes Philip and the others had been climbing a steep bank of steps cut in the lower side of a seemingly endless, sloping passage. The multitude was left behind. Only Sarl and a half-dozen of his court remained with them, all climbing ahead now, with Philip watching their every move and Donald officiating with the automatic that Beryl had carried, by pressing it against his royal nibs' back. About them the mysterious greenish glow still lighted their way.

"You'd think these people would have devised some electrical contrivances to convey them back and forth between the surface and their subterranean abode," observed Donald, technical interest overshadowing for the moment his anxiety over their predicament.

"I have an idea that their reserve of electrical energy is too limited,"

said Philip. "The moon is in its last throes as a world, in physical energy and resources as well as in animal and vegetable life, which calls for strictest conservation wherever and however they can practise——"

A glad cry from Beryl interrupted him.

"Phil—the end of the stairs!" she called, though she did not recognize them, for she had been in a dead swoon when the lunarites carried her down these stairs.

Ahead, a large open space now broke the monotony of the long flight.

"We'd better watch sharply for a surprize attack, Phil," warned Donald. "No telling how many are lying in wait for us up there."

The top of the stairway reached at last, they saw with a thrill a soft glow that seemed almost surely a reflection of sunlight from somewhere. A large chamber with a roof some twenty feet high met their gaze. A half-dozen lunarites stood about, guarding cumbersome geared devices that filled this room row upon row, a ladder leading upward from each.

"The 'caps'!" cried Philip, guessing at once the relation of these machines to those mushroom affairs he had seen pushing up through the snow the day they landed. His heart began to thump wildly at the approaching climax to their hoped-for escape.

At this point one of the dignitaries paused uncertainly.

"We have fulfilled our bargain, *fedosa* (master). You have but to mount to the rim of any of these outlets."

"Your leader goes with us," returned Philip. "When we are all safely outside, he will be permitted to return."

"He can not do that, *fedosa*, for he would perish in the heat."

"He means 'cold'," observed Donald. "Don't you?"—turning to the lunarite spokesman. "Is there much snow left out there?"

"No, no *suss* (snow), but *binor* (fire). "*Suss* all gone. Burned up by sun."

"Well, I'll be jiggered," exploded Donald. "Here we are, all ready to leave and it's too hot. What are we going to do now?"

"Climb up and stick your head outside," suggested Sanderson, evincing interest in their escape now that he saw freedom within their grasp with an opportunity to share it himself. "If you can stand it, the rest of us will take a chance." He grinned in a sickly attempt at humor.

"You get great ideas—you and your 'us' talk *now*. How about trying it yourself? But you haven't the guts, I guess. Hey, there, Phil, let *me* do it."

But Philip already was swiftly mounting the rungs in the nearest of the ladders. No time to waste now on futile arguments!

The caps all were raised, as he could see now, no doubt to ventilate the vast lower regions. Reaching the rim of the one he had selected, he stretched out an arm into the blazing sun.

It was hot, but not unbearably so—not for a brief while at any rate. The lunarites, with their spongy vegetative tissues, would probably fare little better than snails in a desert out there, whereas a human being conceivably might resist the temperature successfully for some time.

"Watch that carrion closely," he called down in final warning. "I'm going to see whether the Rocket is where we left it."

This was vital, for, once they were all outside, the lunarites could easily shut them out by lowering the caps. With no shade and no refuge, they might easily perish in the rays of the sun that blazed unmercifully down through the thin layer of atmosphere.

Fortune was still with them, however. Hardly had he scrambled out on to the burning, lava rock than he saw the Rocket in its original position,

not more than a hundred yards away. A quick dash and he had reached it.

He drew a great breath of relief as he saw the rope still dangling from the rung underneath, where he and Donald had tied it when they had prepared to slide down to the lunar terrain for the first time, more than forty earthly days past. This would speed his passage to the manhole, to which otherwise he must have clambered laboriously by means of the smooth and sloping tubes.

The manhole in the floor was still shut; as Beryl and Sanderson probably had left it for safety, he decided. With bated breath he felt for the hidden latch, pressed it, and saw the cover swing outward.

A rapid search inside showed everything to be in order, though it was terrifically hot. He switched on the cooling-apparatus. It was for just such an emergency as this that it had been installed and was now ready to prove its great value to them. Another half minute and he had dropped back on to the rock below and was racing back to the cap from which he had come.

To his infinite relief, he found all as when he had left, the lunarites still submitting calmly to the urge of the leveled automatics, while Sanderson now was only too well satisfied to throw in his lot with the plan for escape that already had every earmark of success.

"All set?" Philip sang out as he climbed down beside them. "Beryl, you go up first; Don, you next. Then Sanderson. Hurry."

THEY negotiated the ladder rungs without mishap, and Philip made ready to follow.

As he did so, there was an unmistakable tensing of the figures about him. Some hidden sense told him that they were getting ready to rush him. He raised the automatic as he placed his foot on the bottom rung.

"First?" he inquired in the lunar tongue. His foot found the second rung.

"Oh, you would, would you!" The leaping lunarite dropped in his tracks as Philip fired.

Then suddenly they were all screeching and gibbering in an unearthly, swelling volume as they rushed him. No time or use in making good his threat to shoot Sarl first. His second, third, fourth and fifth deliberate shots dropped as many lunarites at the foot of the ladder while he steadily mounted to half-way. Then he turned and made a dash for the top.

At the rim he paused long enough to drop his two nearest pursuers, one of them the snarling Sarl. He had made good his threat after all.

In that moment he saw for the first time, and to his horror, that other ladders were filled with screeching gray men who, in their disappointment and rage, had apparently forgotten their avowed fear of the scorching heat outside. Suppose Beryl was still within their reach out there! He fled in frank panic at the thought.

The fierce heat beat upon him like a blast from a crucible as he emerged and ran toward the Rocket. With a thrill of relief, he saw Beryl just disappearing inside the Rocket, followed by Sanderson. Donald—good old Don! —had paused to help him, his weapon even now spitting at the nearest lunarites. With a final leap, Philip reached his side and turned his own weapon on their attackers.

"Inside, Don," he gasped. "Quick —so I can follow you!"

"Counfounded if I do——"

"And damned if you don't. Damn it: we *both* can't be last. That's it—up you go. Awk! Take that, you jelly-fish!" A rash lunarite who had attempted to drag him from the rope crashed to the ground below.

Then the deed was done—a satisfying click sounded as the manhole closed; the most beautiful of all

sounds Philip could remember having heard, ever.

"Tight fit, that," observed Donald, trembling.

"Phil! Are you all right?"—from Beryl.

"Sure. Gang way! Let me see what those fiends are doing out there."

A dread sight met his anxious peering through the glass. The lunarites' attack had suddenly collapsed. The terrific heat, against which those flabby bodies held so little resistance, was striking them down in heaps. A few of the more fortunate ones had reached the caps, were feebly crawling inside. Others writhed helplessly on the flint-like, burning rock, while dozens lay quiet about the Rocket. Truly they must have been desperate beyond all ordinary reason, but whether that desperation was born principally of their reluctance to let Beryl escape or was caused by the killing of their leader, could not be known.

"Ugh, what a mess!" Sanderson muttered thickly.

"And you turned down your own race for that mess," cried Donald.

"What I did was meant for our good in the end."

"Like Hades it was! You were protecting your own hide, purely and simply."

"Never mind that now," Philip interjected. "Let's try to get this big cigar in motion once more."

"You said it. Back home to Mother Earth for us," said Sanderson eagerly.

"Not yet. We've more important things to do first."

"You're not going to beat it away from this damned lava ball?"—incredulously. "Then what——"

"We came a quarter of a million miles to explore the surface of the moon, and we're going to do it if our power holds out," said Philip. "That is," he hesitated, "provided Beryl and Don are willing."

"We're with you, Phil," said Donald, after a quick glance at Beryl.

"Of course we are," she seconded promptly, and firmly.

"Well, of all the——" Sanderson began. "Where does Your Majesty plan heading first?"

"If we can get started, to the invisible hemisphere."

"The 'invisible hemisphere'?" gasped Beryl. "Why — where and what is that?"

"That is the side of the moon we never see from the earth. You see, the moon is shaped something like a pear, and this side is the 'heavier' side, or bottom, which the pull of the earth always keeps turned toward it, the moon rotating on its axis as a result in exactly the same time it takes for it to pass round the earth in its twenty-nine day orbit. No one on earth ever has glimpsed that mysterious hemisphere on the opposite side —'behind the moon'."

THE problem of getting the Rocket under way once more was a stumper, however. Obviously, it was impossible to raise this tremendously heavy machine to its normal, upright starting-position, even on the moon, where its weight was reduced by five-sixths of its earthly weight. For the bare lunar surface offered no convenient tree or material for rigging up a hoist to raise the Rocket's head by mechanical means.

"We've but one chance, and we'll have to take it," pronounced Philip, finally. "We'll charge the tubes and chance sliding off this level plain into space without crashing our walls in."

The others paled. The prospect of the violent death that would probably be theirs if the plan failed was a facer. Beryl was the first to break the long silence.

"It's that or—or return to the lunarites, isn't it?"

"Or remain right here until our power, heat and food all are depleted. We could but be postponing our fate —and tossing away the only chance we have, slender as it is."

"Then, let's take the chance right away," she decided.

Sanderson, his face the color of paste, moved his lips as if to protest, but no sound issued from them. Donald, watching covertly, threw him a look of scorn and turned away. It was in that instant that Sanderson leaped suddenly, wildly, for Philip, who was already at the controls.

"Phil!" cried Beryl in warning.

The inventor looked up just in time. He caught the upraised hand with the clasp-knife before it could sweep downward on its destructive arc. A quick twist, and the weapon clattered on to the floor while Sanderson rubbed the strained muscles of his right hand and wrist ruefully. Donald retrieved the knife promptly, then proceeded to back Sanderson away from the region of the controls, with the persuasion of his automatic.

"Getting to be a regular Peck's bad boy, aren't you? Gosh, but you've become a nuisance."

Philip shook his head wearily. That they must mistrust and use violent force against one of their own party boded ill indeed.

"All set?" he called after a bit, when Sanderson had sullenly agreed to a truce, and all except Philip were stationed at the safety grips in the wall.

"All set," Donald answered, after a quick glance at the others.

There was a terrific grinding, and single bounding jar—then a sense of soaring.

Gripping the levers with all his strength, Philip retained his control of that giant mechanical monster in its curving sweep up from the floor of the lunar plane. With a sigh of relief he saw the others getting to their feet, apparently unhurt. He checked the Rocket's speed to a minimum, hovering now but a few miles above the moon's brilliant surface.

"Once again, folks," he asked; "shall we return right now to the earth, since we are safely launched, or do you vote to see first all we came here to see? I'll be neutral. Come—which shall it be?"

"We already decided that," said Donald. "We're with you to the finish."

"Of course," confirmed Beryl.

Sanderson turned away sulkily. They all knew his preference.

"Then it's ho for the back of the Man-in-the-Moon's neck," he cried. "We're on our way."

CHAPTER 12

THE marvels of the lunar terrain were sliding slowly past again beneath them as the Rocket drifted farther and farther toward the limits of the familiar hemisphere that we on earth know so well. They were following the lunar day round this globe, though easily exceeding its lazy, 700-hour-per-revolution passage of some ten miles an hour! Thus, even at their own present leisurely speed, they would shortly catch up with the day's dawn and pass into the night ahead of it unless they landed before that.

It was Philip's plan to remain well within that day's boundaries in its march out of the known hemisphere into that perpetually hidden and mysterious one beyond its confines, exploring from the heights as they went, and landing at least once more if the region promised fresh lore and propitious landing possibilities. Eagerly he let his imagination travel on ahead. Would the new hemisphere contain oceans and fertile regions like those of the earth? Or perhaps some weird and awful secret, too dreadful for even his imagination to suggest? Would this as-yet-unseen region hold beings like the little gray men they had just left behind; or would they find a different race entirely, totally cut off from the others by barriers of climate, as effectively as if by thousands of miles of space?

At this point in his mental ramblings his attention was flagged by

the sharp outlines of a large crater rising above the western horizon. Almost they were at the limits of the earth-known lunar world.

"There," he said, pointing, "is the last conspicuous outpost of the hemisphere our astronomers know. Soon we shall get our first glimpse of the 'forbidden region'."

A tense silence descended upon the little group of adventurers as each member pondered what that unknown terrain might hold for their gaze. Somewhat the same qualms must have assailed the crew of the *Santa Maria* when they gazed fearfully out over the unfolding horizon over four centuries earlier. Would the plain suddenly drop off in a sheer precipice across the surface of the satellite? Or would they perhaps find a vast sea?

But, like Columbus and his fellow mariners, they might have saved themselves these anxieties—at least for the time being. As the Rocket soared over and beyond that last known and centuries-extinct crater, their eager eyes met only the same sort of scenes as that with which they had already grown familiar. More craters, more stretches of smooth lava floor broken between craters only by raised seams where the cooling molten rock had lapped; and here and there a crater radiating the light streaks or fissures on the plain round it like those streaks about Copernicus.

Thus, at first, their fears were allayed—even turned to disappointment, such is the perverseness of the human mind.

Then, slowly, unmistakably, a definite change began to creep over the terrain. For one thing, the horizon steadily began to lengthen ahead and in back of them strangely, the while shortening on each side! It was as if they were riding a long, though hugely wide and vast, sagging hogback. True, the nearer horizons still were too far away to show any decided curve to the surface swaying some four or five miles below. Yet the impression persisted—as of a tilting down and away of the terrain on two sides of them.

"The pear!" Donald ejaculated irrelevantly.

"Pear—what do you mean?" asked Sanderson irritably, anxiety lining his countenance.

But Beryl caught the significance of Donald's remark at once.

"Why—he must mean the shape of the moon. You know you said, Phil, that the side always pointed toward the earth is larger, heavier than the other side. I recall now that it was one of the first things we learned about the moon in school—that it was not a nearly perfect globe like our earth, but pear-shaped.

"Right," said Philip. "And we're plainly traveling along its tapering length—along a continuation of the equator and directly toward its 'peak' or 'stem' end!"

"Is that safe?" cried Sanderson. "Surely you won't persist in going on in the face of a phenomenon like this. How do we know what effect all this will produce?"

"Aw, what's one phenom more or less in our young lives," asked Donald, "after coming more than two hundred thousand miles through space? We took our big chance when we hopped off earth. There's no use being quitters now."

"Of course," said Beryl. "We *couldn't* turn back now. It would be a shame to miss this chance to see just what this side is like."

Her first fears had been replaced by the eagerness of a child on a picnic. This eagerness Philip and Donald shared with her. The scowling Sanderson was outvoted. The Rocket continued on its course.

Meantime another marked change was coming over the surface below. The craters were growing fewer, farther apart, and lower. At the same time the terrain between the craters was taking on a mottled appearance. Here and there dark, scattered patches ap-

peared. And these steadily grew larger in size, less scattered, until they were more in evidence than the bare lava plains.

"Look! over there is a great big patch extending beyond the horizon on three sides," said Donald, pointing ahead and slightly off to the right of their course.

As they proceeded, this vast and densest-of-all patch took on an aspect not unlike a large sea. Yet it was clear, even at this height, that it was not an expanse of water they were looking upon.

"It looks more like a dwarf forest, or perhaps a dense thicket of a sort," mused Philip, as they all surveyed the great shadowy expanse that now all but spread over the entire visible surface of the moon.

Only behind them, on one of the two more-distinct sections of the horizon, was a slice of the lighter, open plain still visible.

And as they looked back lingeringly at that strip of open plain, a spot of black appeared at one corner. This spot slowly pushed out on to the neck of light terrain, spread and covered that part of the wedge between the surrounding shadows. Then the scene was lost on the horizon.

"What did you make of *that*?" muttered Donald.

"Might have been a young army of lunarites belatedly aroused by our passage overhead," hazarded Beryl.

"Perhaps," said Philip thoughtfully.

He was thinking of something Azan had said once — some vague remark dropped about crawling shapes among the stunted growths of their near-by crater, from whence they drew their meager supply of fiber.

"Are you intending to land in that mass?" Sanderson asked, a hint of menace mingling with the anxiety in his voice, as the Rocket moved along over the unbroken dark-gray expanse.

"I am not," Philip reassured him. "We will not land until we either know more about that dark surface or find another patch. Besides, we haven't yet discovered the stem, or pole, of this pear-shaped satellite."

All the time the horizon had continued drawing closer on each side of their course. They could easily discern the curious shaping of this part of the satellite—like an immense, long, sagging cone, still hundreds of miles in circumference, however. Its ends stretched off distantly in strange contrast to the nearness of the horizon on the sides.

But the horizon ahead began to lose its strange suggestion of an upward curve, and began to shrink, too. Philip judged — and correctly, as they were to learn ere long — that the Rocket was at last nearing the "top" of the moon, the very center of that mysterious hidden hemisphere!

An hour later, now close behind the edge of the receding night, the adventurers stared down upon the first spot of open territory they had seen since Donald had pointed out the great dark-hued expanse which soon afterward had spread beyond the horizon in every direction. A curious bulge characterized the region of this spot—curious not so much because of its knoll-like shape as because of the now greatly shortened horizon in every direction about it. Evidently they had actually arrived at the "stem" of this enormous pear-shaped world.

Toward this bare surface Philip allowed the Rocket to fall with exceeding carefulness, while the others watched with bated breath. At a word from Philip, Donald stationed himself beside the main switch by which all five tubes could be cut off instantly and simultaneously. This he was to throw the moment the Rocket touched the surface below.

The experience of one landing was behind them—not a comforting volume of experience or skill for this intricate and all but impossible feat, to be sure, but it must suffice. With a con-

centration and tenseness that stretched his nerves taut, Philip juggled that dangerously vast reservoir of explosive power, dropping the Rocket ever nearer to the center of that mile-wide plain.

Then, somehow, they were almost unaccountably and abruptly at rest—upright this time. The second landing was achieved, successfully, and with scarcely a jolt to mark the event.

CHAPTER 13

THE rays of the morning sun shone sparkling clear on what appeared to be a miniature desert about the Rocket. In its loose surface a great bowl-shaped depression had been blown by the checked blast of the tubes. The windows of the Rocket looked out on a level with the desert.

Without fear this time of any outrushing of the precious air pressure inside the chamber, the adventurers lowered the ladder through the manholes and descended. Their feet sank into a carpet of coarse white sand, through which they scrambled to the rim above. There they paused to survey their surroundings.

Newly risen here, Old Sol had just begun to temper the chill of the air. It might have been a rare spring morning at home, so perfect was the temperature. They were not wearing the special warming coats and masks that they had worn on their first landing, having tested the air in advance through an opened window.

The Rocket, they saw, had come to rest not more than two hundred yards from the edge of the plain, which was isolated from any other open spaces in this region by the solid gray growth they had observed from aloft. This looked to be about fifteen feet high at the most, tapering down somewhat where it met the sand. It appeared, at the distance, to be some twisted sort of coarse vine growth.

"Not a madly stimulating view," remarked Beryl. "A dinky desert, hemmed in by a mysterious jungle. Hello!—what are you up to, Don?"

The latter was stooping over something that had caught his eye in the sand. A low whistle escaped him as he straightened up with whatever it was in his hand.

"Something tells me that this spot may prove more 'stimulating' than anticipated," he cried. "Just take a look at this—will you?"

The three of them gathered round him quickly.

"If I'm any judge of precious stones—and I once made quite a study of them—we are looking upon a genuine diamond in the rough—one that would cut and polish to at least ten carats," he explained. "And where that came from there are doubtless plenty more. Probably lots bigger ones!"

"Don!" gasped Beryl. "You mean——"

"That we all are as rich as oil barons—if we ever get back to the earth!"

"On one diamond?" smiled Philip.

Nevertheless he was as thrilled as the rest. He knew Donald to be something of an expert on precious stones, for the preacher-mechanician had once carried religion to the natives of Brazil's wildest regions. It was there he had become familiar with the diamonds for which that country is famous.

Sanderson already was sprawled upon hands and knees, feverishly sifting the sand through his fingers. His breath whistled audibly between his parted lips. The others joined him in varying degrees of similar eagerness.

For some minutes there was no sound save the breathing of four pairs of lungs and the sifting and shuffling of sand. Then:

"Say, are you trying to play a trick on us with a phony stone out of your pocket?" Sanderson rasped abruptly, halting his efforts to fix Donald with a suspicious glare.

"There are no stones like that in this sand, and you know it."

Donald rolled over and sat up to return the scowling botanist's stare.

"I took no stone from my pocket. The one I showed you came from this sand. Now, is it my fault because you can't find another?"

"Just because one diamond was found, it doesn't follow that there are dozens more scattered all around it," said Beryl. "But maybe we'll run across one or two more yet, if we keep on looking."

However, a half-hour later their search still was unrewarded.

"It's no use," Donald said, finally. "I guess I must have found the only one around here. Besides, it isn't natural for diamonds to be found in such soil. The one I found was probably carried here from somewhere else."

"By what, for instance?" Sanderson wanted to know.

A squeal of delight prevented a reply.

"I've found one—I've found one!" Beryl cried, running toward them with one hand held out triumphantly.

A stone similar to the one Donald had displayed lay in her palm—proved, in fact, upon examination, to be another diamond in the rough, though only half the size of the first.

"Well," said Philip, "there's no joke about this. There are diamonds to be found around here—probably enough to make us all rich."

"And I'm going to find mine right now," announced Sanderson, already back at his grubbing.

Philip approached Donald with studied casualness. He had observed him wandering about and studying their near-by surroundings with an odd look.

"What is it, old man?" he asked guardedly.

"Phil"—the other's voice was low but excitement made it vibrate strangely—"can you figure out what might have made those tracks—running off there toward that dwarf jungle? Take a look on my right—and farther over there in either direction."

Following his significant glance, Philip saw then what had escaped his notice in the excitement of their first view of their new surroundings, and in the interest that had followed Donald's finding of the diamond.

A shallow, toboggan-like slide showed in the sand close by, like a very wide toboggan track. Then he noticed that other slides showed here and there beyond, crisscrossing the sand between them and that crouching jungle of vines. In the nearer track curious tracings appeared—delicate but large in pattern, like the imprint of a giant fern frond, repeated over and over.

Philip and Donald eyed each other mutely for a few moments. Then: "Those moving blotches," murmured Donald. "Remember—back there across the neck of that last plain?"

Philip nodded. Only too well did he remember and link that previous observation with these significant signs. At any time the desert plain on which they stood might be invaded by the same creatures they had seen issuing from that other dark region.

Yet they had come to observe, had braved—nay, defied—the laws of gravitation and space in order to have this very opportunity. Then, too, there was the Rocket, upright now and ready for almost instant flight in an emergency.

"Let's see it through, Don. What do you say?"

"Right."

They gripped hands for a moment surreptitiously, and turned back to the others. Beryl had joined Sanderson in his gem hunt, though less feverishly and with a wholesome zest that contrasted sharply against his muttering excitement.

The sun was not heating the air so rapidly as it had done in the other hemisphere, possibly because of the

sharp curvature of the satellite's surface in this region. At any rate, the discomfort attending the continued shining of the sun on their first landing, and at the time of their hurried escape from the lunarites, was not at all in evidence now. Apparently, the temperature here was more uniform, more constant. The surrounding vegetation probably had something, too, to do with this, by absorbing the excess heat as well as by retaining and throwing off an abating warmth during at least the early part of the nights.

"One of us must stand guard at the Rocket," said Philip.

"It can't be John," Donald returned bluntly. "As like as not, he'd jump inside and hop off in a tight pinch, leaving us to our fate."

"You've a lot of confidence in our playmate, haven't you? But I am obliged to say that I feel about the same. It will have to be you or I. Here—I'm matching you for choice. . . . Tails it is. All right, I'll serve with the scouting-party. O. K.?"

"Sure—didn't you win?"

No more stones had been found. Beryl had desisted from her searching and was watching Donald and Philip with pointed curiosity.

"Talk Beryl into staying here with you," Philip whispered.

"I heard that remark," said Beryl quickly. "And I'm *not* going to stay around here. *I'm* going with you"—firmly.

"Waste of time, arguing with a woman," remarked Donald. "Might as well take her along. She'll go anyway."

"Solomon himself," she purred, throwing Donald a bright smile. Then to Philip: "Do we start right away—and where can we go, after all?"

"Probably not more than a few hundred yards from this spot," he answered, eyeing that ominous fringe of matted vines. The rest of their little desert, with its mile or less of monotonous expanse, invited small interest. "But just the same, young woman"—he turned and fixed her with what he hoped was a cold gaze—"*you're* going to remain right here."

She looked at him in frank surprize. Then he saw her eyes drop. Did he only imagine that she was laughing inwardly at his solemnity?

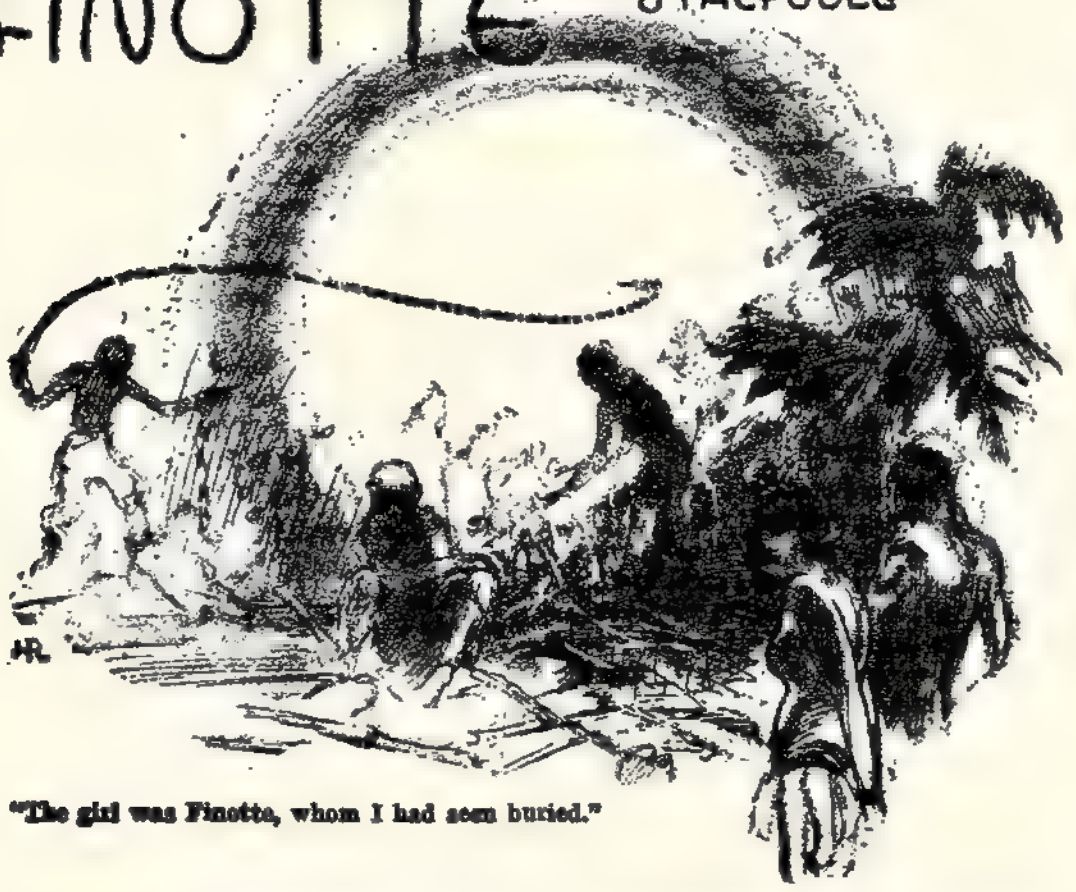
"All right, Phil, I'll stay," she said, meekly enough.

"Well, I'll be——" began Donald.

The unthinkable dangers and weird horrors of that dwarf forest on the Moon will be detailed in next month's chapters, which bring this story to its conclusion.

DEAD GIRL FINOTTE

by H. de VERE STACPOOLE



"The girl was Finotte, whom I had seen buried."

IF YOU have read Mr. Seabrooke's book on Haiti, *The Magic Island*, recently published, you must have been struck by the chapter entitled *Dead Men Working in the Cane Fields*.

As I was talking recently on this matter to Mr. de Travers the neurologist of Geneva, American born and with a large experience of the West Indies and of the negro mind, he said, "Why not?"

"Because," said I, "it's impossible. It would be easier to make one of Karel Capek's robots than to take a dead man and put motive power into him and turn him into a slave. You know yourself the post-mortem changes that take place in the tissues of the body; even magic has limits, and——"

"A moment," said he. "I mentioned Mr. Seabrooke's book as confirmation of the story I had to tell you, and perhaps you will suspend judgment on the whole matter till I have finished. The story has to do with Martinique.

"Many years ago when quite a young man I lived at St. Pierre, Martinique.

"St. Pierre, now a mound of ashes, stood quite alone amongst the towns of the world; there was no other place like it: gay as Paris with a touch of New Orleans, yellow-tinted and palm-

topped against the burning blue of the sky, its old French houses looked down upon a bay of sapphire rarely stirred by the great winds and heavy seas that torment the northeastern side of the island.

"I lived in the Rue Victor Hugo, a street that traversed the whole length of the town, and I had only to step on to my balcony to look down on a crowd more astonishing than any dream of the *Arabian Nights*. Nearly all creoles of all tints from the octoroon to the chabine, the women gay as tropical birds; idlers, loungers, chatterers, street-singers, itinerant sellers of fruit, fish, pastry and heaven knows what; a moving market; a business scene, touched with the charm of the unreal.

"I had three rooms all on the same floor and for personal servant, Baidaux, a young man, a creole, handsome, dark-eyed, serious and entirely devoted to me; he bought everything and I was never robbed and always sure of the finest mangoes, sapotas and avocats in the market; his coffee was the best in Martinique, and he was always there when wanted. Except on Sundays. It seems he had a girl; she lived away over beyond Morne Rouge toward Grande Anse, a town on the seaboard to the northwest and twenty miles from St. Pierre; her name was Finotte; and every Sunday he would vanish before dawn, taking his way on foot by the great national road La Trace, which, winding like a ribbon over hill and dale, by morne and mountain, cocoa plantation and cane field, took him to Finotte.

"But always on Monday morning at eight o'clock he would be in my room pulling up my blind and handing me my morning coffee.

"'*Bonjour, M'sieur.*'

"'*Bonjour,* Baidaux—and how is Finotte?'

"I dreaded Finotte and the day surely to come when marriage would join them and separate me from Baidaux.

"Life has many losses; not the least is the loss of a good servant, but Baidaux was not of the precipitate sort; he was laying by and building his nest as a bird might build, only with francs instead of sticks and feathers. I judged from what he said that it would be at least a year before the happy day—and unhappy for me—when Finotte would come to St. Pierre to take her place in that little shop in the Rue du Morne Mirail which he had marked down as their future home.

"Ah, well! One Monday morning he did not return; on the Wednesday he returned, but it was not Baidaux—it was a much older man.

"'*Bonjour, M'sieur.*'

"'*Bonjour,* Baidaux—and how is Finotte?'

"He put up his hands without a word; then I knew she was dead.

"He made the coffee as usual and put out my clothes.

"Yes, she was dead—it all came out gradually; he had arrived to find her dying—she was dead and buried. Of what had she died? He did not know. She was dead. He had seen her buried and had returned. That was all.

"He went on with his work. There was nothing else to do except die, and he was not of that sort, and time passed till a month had slipped away and the carnival came and passed with its rioting and drums sharply cut off by Lent. Then—it might have been a month later—one evening I found him at the street door talking to an old woman, a *capresse*, very old and wrinkled, her head bound up in a foulard turban. It was Maman Robert, the mother of Finotte.

"He told me that, speaking with a look in his eyes I had never seen before, a wild, far-gazing look disturbing as his manner; for he seemed like a person cut off from all reality and he said that he must go away, leave me

for a time, but that he would return soon—perhaps.

"He left that night, and though I did not follow him I knew quite well that his road was the great national road that had led him so often toward Grand Anse and the home of his girl.

2

"You know at St. Pierre everyone knew everyone — the washerwomen by the river Roxalanne—the fruit-sellers in the market by the fort — the old women selling carossoles at the street corners—they were like a big family as far as rumors were concerned: a story started at dawn in the Rue du Morne Mirail would travel down to the Rue Victor Hugo by noon and be on the front by night, and you may be sure that the story of Baidaux wasn't slow in traveling, but no repercussion of it came back to me till one day a *porteuse* in from the hills stopped to speak to my old landlady, Maman Jean, and gave her word of Baidaux.

"I must tell you a *porteuse* is—alas! was—a sort of girl commercial traveler; barefooted and with a great bundle on her head she would take goods from the city all over the island through the country parts, and this girl just in from the northwest had seen Baidaux near Grande Anse. He was looking very wild, living on the plantation of a creole named Jean Labat and—it was a pity.

"Those were her words.

"Yes, it was a pity, a thousand pities when I remembered him as he had been, so bright, intelligent, well-gróomed and efficient, and he had been fond of me.

"The fondness of a good servant for his master, and conversely, is a thing apart from all other forms of attachment, and those four words of the *porteuse* seemed somehow intended for me, as one might say, 'Can you do nothing for him?'

"I took them to heart and determined to go over to Grande Anse, hunt about, try to find him and if possible bring him back to himself and my service. I started next day, taking with me a bag with a few things and hiring a two-horse trap.

3

"It was only twenty miles from St. Pierre to Grande Anse—all the same a long journey; for the great national road winds over hill and dale and it is squealing brakes and laboring horses a good part of the way, but no road in the world is just like that for scenery; the purple mornes and blue distances, the fields of cane and the high woods of balisier and palm and mahogany all lie beneath a blinding light that has got in it something of the mournful nature of darkness.

"Here, indeed, to the European mind, is a land of things unknown, half known, and dimly suspected, for under this riot of color and light lies the poison of the manchaneel apple and the centipede and the fer de lance, the poison of plants dealing in death, delirium or madness and old superstitions from the shores of far-off Africa transplanted but growing firmly.

"Grand Anse is a little town lying right on the coast. Here there are great cliffs hundreds of feet in height and the beach is of black sand and nearly always alive with a thunderous surf. The cliffs form two promontories, the Pointe du Rochet and the Pointe de Croche Mort. Such is Grande Anse, and I put up at the chief inn of the town and later that day began to make inquiries about Baidaux.

"No one knew of him.

"He was interesting to St. Pierre folk because he had been born there, but here he was of no interest. Then I asked about Maman Robert, the mother of Finotte.

"Ah, yes, Finotte, she who had died some months ago. Well, she and her mother had lived in the little hamlet

of Mirail close to the plantation of Jean Labat. The mother lived there still. Then came silence, and the cause of it was Labat, whose plantation lay near the village. He was both disliked and feared. I could tell that at once by the faces and the shrugs and the drawing back as if from the very name. He grew cocoa and sugar and had a distillery—*rhommerie*—but people did not visit that plantation.

"Would anyone lead me to the house of Finotte's mother? No; it was close to the plantation and Jean Labat had dogs.

"I might have started out myself despite the dogs and made an attempt to find the place, feeling sure that Finotte's mother would be able to put me on the traces of Baidaux—but things turned out differently.

4

"IT WAS the second evening of my stay at Grande Anse and I had gone for a walk on the black sands to watch the waves coming in under the last of the sunset; then, turning at dark, I began to climb the stiff path that leads up from the beach along the side of the great swell of ground that forms the side of the Pointe du Rochet.

"The night was moonless but alight with stars, and it was my idea to reach the top of the bluff, have a look at the starlit world from there and then return to Grande Anse by the track the goats have trodden out in the basalt. The lights had gone out in the little town, where everybody turns in at dark, but I was sure of the inn being open.

"More than half-way up I paused. On the sky-line just above I saw two men. A man of vast stature and a man of ordinary size, they were walking in single file and the latter was leading. Then they stopped. I thought they had seen me, but that was not so. They stopped only for a moment and then the smaller man pointed straight ahead; that is to say, where the bluff ended at the cliff edge and a fall of four hundred feet sheer with nothing but the waves below.

"At the pointing the tall man went straight ahead in the direction indicated, but I had never seen a man walk like that before, the way he raised his feet, the way he held himself — why, he seemed a mechanical figure, not a man; a thing wound up to go, not a thing going of its own volition.

"He kept on till he reached the cliff edge, but he did not stop—he stepped over and in an instant there was nothing but the night, the stars and the roar of the sea—and the other man. The other man was Baidaux. I could see that now as he came closer along the sky-line. He came to the cliff edge and looked down; then he stood with arms folded looking at the sea.

"I had found him — but heavens, what was all this?

"I am a man nervous by nature, but still I have courage if the cause is good or if a certain thing has to be done.

"I had to find out about this and I continued climbing till I reached the top of the bluff just as he was turning from the sea and coming back toward me.

"He did not stop on seeing me; he seemed quite indifferent to this new person the night had sprung on him. Close up he recognized me.

" 'Baidaux,' I said. 'What is this?'

"He stood for a moment without speaking; then he heaved a great sigh as though awakened from sleep. 'It is I, Baidaux,' said he; 'you have seen him. It is long since we parted, and it is right that you should know about him and about her.'

"He was no longer a servant or an ex-servant, just a being level in station with myself but with a feeling from the past that it was right that I should know his affairs. He who had told me of his girl and his plans for the future had now to tell me what had happened to him, culminating in

the amazing tragedy of a few moments ago.

"He led the way down the slope by way of the goat track, and then in the shelter from the wind and by a great clump of tree ferns he sat down on the ground, still warm from the vanished sun, and motioned me to his side.

" 'In St. Pierre,' said he, 'you were good to me and I opened my heart, telling you of my affairs and of my girl; you remember, on the Sundays I used to come over here starting before the light of day and whilst the *Cabribois* still filled the woods with sound. Then the day came when I found my girl dying. Maman Robert, her mother, could not say what ailed her, and Maman Faly, who is the doctor for all the workers round these parts, said she had been seized with a fever from the woods. No matter, she died—but you will remember all this; I only say it to keep my mind from traveling astray as one might follow a string in the dark, for the things I have to tell belong indeed to the darkness that is deeper than night.

" 'I came back to you and life went on. I had no need of it but I could not cast it away; it is not easy for a man to lose the habit of living even after it becomes an evil habit to him.

" 'I went on as one dead might go on with his work, could he be moved by some spirit of life.

" 'Then one evening Cyrilla, who was the girl of the landlady where your rooms were, came to me and said:

" " 'There is one who wishes to speak to you, Baidaux.'

" 'I went to the door and there I found the mother of my girl, Maman Robert.

" 'I said to her, "What do you want?" and she said, "I have come to speak to you about Finotte."

" 'I said, "What then about Finotte?" thinking the old woman had come to me for money as is the way with relatives of those one loves, but I had done her a wrong.

" 'She answered, "I have come to you from Finotte—and I would bring you to her," and as she spoke the flesh crawled on my bones, for I had seen Finotte buried in the place where the people are buried by the palmiste grove near her home — where of a Sunday we used sometimes to go to look on the graves of the dead and say to ourselves, "Without doubt some day we will be here," for I never had the fancy to be buried at St. Pierre.

" 'I listened to what the old woman said and I could say nothing to her in reply, till my lips moved and they said, "Very well — but not now — leave me and I will come."

" 'You remember, I did not leave you at once after that old woman had been there. In fact I was afraid. I said to myself, "Maybe that old woman is not a woman but a *Zombie* come to betray me and steal my soul." I knew her well—how should one not know the mother of one's girl?—but a man's mind is strange and full of fear in the dark and in the unknown.

" 'Then I put all that by and said to myself, "I will go."

" 'I had always set out on foot on my journeys to Finotte and before dawn, so as to get there in the early day. I could have taken the stage to Morne Rouge and got a horse from there, but I could go as I had always gone, on foot; so I went past Morne Rouge and the old Calebasse road past Ajoupa-Bouillon, past the Rivière Falaise, pausing only to rest for a moment by the great gommier that marks where the path to the village of Mirail strikes off from the road.

" 'Here I stayed an hour, resting in the shade, so that it was past noon when, taking the path, I sought the litfle house of Maman Robert.

" 'It lies by the cocoa fields, and a great wood of balissiers shelters it from the trade wind; you can hear like the voice in the shell the sea on the beach of Grande Anse and now

and then from the wood the call of the *sifleur de montagne.*

"'Beyond the cocoa fields lies the *rhommerie* and beyond that the house of Jean Labat. It is all only two kilometers from here where I sit talking to you now, and the graveyard where the creoles are buried lies only half a kilometer from the house of Maman Robert.

"'I found her in the house, but she would say nothing of the business I had come on—only this: "I will take you after dark."

5

"'And then it happened. The moon had risen, and leading me by the shadows of the trees she crossed a cultivated field to the barren part where the wild canes and sword-grass grew.

"'Here she paused where before us lay a field preparing for cultivation of manioc, and lifting up a finger she said, "Listen!"

"'I heard nothing—nothing but the canes talking to the wind and the voice of the sea very far away.

"'Again she said, "Listen!" yet I heard nothing but the cry of a night bird, far beyond the manioc field.

"'Then the clink of iron, and they came round the bend of the cane clump, breaking the earth with their hoes, followed at a little distance by a boy with a goad, as oxen are followed by their driver.

"'Four figures in the moonlight. Three men and a girl, walking not as men walk, working as the spindles in the cotton mill, without sense of mind, followed by the boy their driver—and the girl was Finotte whom I had seen buried and the tallest of the men was Jaquin who had died six months before and I was looking at them and I went not mad.

"'For I knew. I, Baidaux, am not an ignorant man and I knew of the *culte* which is brother to the *Culte des Morts:* Look you, they give a man a drink that brings the fever; he dies; he is buried—but he is not dead; he only sleeps without breathing; his people mourn him and bury him and leave him in the grave. Then come the wicked ones and dig him up; he breathes again and lives, yet he is not truly alive like you and me, for his mind has left him, for the drug has killed his brain. He can hear and obey but he can not think, so he can hew wood and draw water and hoe the fields and cut the cane, without thought, without word, without pay—except a handful of food.

"'Ah! Jean Labat, it was an evil day for you when you took the girl of Baidaux for your slave—but it is finished.

"'"Come," I said to the old woman who was holding to me and pointing; "our place is not here; lead me to the house of Maman Faly, the woman who deals in herbs and who helped to lay out your daughter who was once my girl."

"'I knew, for my mind had taken the sight of a vulture.

"'At the little house where the evil woman lived I knocked, and she opened and with my knife-point at her throat she told all.

"'"Come," I said, "the drug, the drug, I have need of the drug; prepare it or die." She had it ready prepared and she gave it to me. "If this fails I will return and kill you," I said. "It will not fail," she replied, and I knew she spoke the truth and I killed her with a thrust of the knife and was caught up in a flame that carried me to the house of Jean Labat, where he lived alone with his wickedness.

"'I beat on his door and he opened it and I drove him with my knife into a room. He was a big man but I was a legion; he was a coward because he was wicked.

"'I made him lie upon the floor. He chose the drug rather than instant death and he could not return it for my knife was at his throat. The fever came on before daybreak and I sat

with him to nurse him till the man came who looked after the cooking and house-tending; then I left him, and calling all the hands of the plantation I spoke to them of their wickedness and they fled; so that there was nothing left but the crowing of cocks and the clapping of doors to the wind and the creeping of the great centipedes that live among the walls of the *rhommerie* and the three dead men and the girl in the shed where they rested when not at work, and me—me, Baidaux—and Labat.

"'I had thought to play with him and torment him and make him my slave—but you can not play with a machine. Tonight I made him drown in the sea. He was no other use.'

"'And the three dead men and the girl?' I asked.

"Baidaux laughed, and rose up and walked away without a word of good-bye, and though he had not replied to my question I knew that they were no longer working on that plantation.

"I watched him away down the goat track and then passing beyond the trees at the rise of the bluff.

"I never saw him again."

A Weird Story About Captain Kidd

Newgate Ghost

By WILLIAM R. HICKEY

MIDNIGHT hung over Newgate. Somewhere about 12 a squall had burst upon the jail, a burst of screaming wind that made the buildings rock, and a copious drift of rain that streamed from the high walls. The downpour increased, beating a regular tattoo upon the gutterways. Then splitting the squares of greater blackness which marked the barred casements of the cells came flash after flash of lightning. As the blinding light died out, came the crash of thunder, harsh and fearsome, more imminently above the jail than ever. Newgate seemed to rock upon its foundations.

Coming as they did, horror and the wrath of heaven together, suddenly, crashingly, black and angry after the fairness of the day, these happenings and their settings must have terrorized the stoutest heart. But Davie Bartmey stood unconcerned within his cell. He seemed detached, as if set apart, a spectator, for some particular whirl of events. Even when a vague yellow light crept across the floor from the direction of the corridor, and flickered unsteadily through the grille of the iron-studded door, he remained unmoved.

Davie Bartmey, late of Kidd's crew, was sentenced to be hanged at dawn. He realized that the ultimate issue was at hand, but either because he was emotionally exhausted, or for some other reason, the pending climax failed to disturb him.

But now a slightly different sound caused him to move toward the barred grille. Someone, holding a lantern high, had turned into the narrow corridor leading to his cell. The stone walls, slime-covered and dripping, left scant room for the man's broad

shoulders. Mayhap the jailer! So thought Davie as he watched the approaching figure, though he knew it was not yet dawn.

But now, as a forked streak worked its way in from the outside and snaked blindingly down the reeking corridor, Davie gave a gasp of amazement. In the momentary flash he had recognized the tall figure wearing a broad-brimmed hat and a dark cloak thrown over the shoulders. One hand held the lantern aloft while the other clasped the loosened folds of his cloak away from the dampish walls.

"By the pope!" cried Davie, pressing his face tightly against the grille. " 'Tis Captain Kidd!"

The heavily cloaked figure stopped without the door and seemed to tense into an attitude of listening. But there came no sound but the trickle of water and the howling of the wind above the jail.

"Aye, Davie! 'Tis Kidd! And a straight road to thy freedom!"

The voice was deep, hollow-toned, the intonation sepulchral. But Davie, in his joy, noted naught amiss.

Came the grating of a rusty key, a grinding of little-used hinges and in the wall an oblong patch of black showed where the iron-studded door had opened into the cell. For a space there was silence. Davie Bartmey could scarce believe his eyes. Captain Kidd . . . notorious buccaneer . . . long sought . . . captured . . . sentenced to hang. . . . This same Kidd was loose in Newgate, and faced him across the cell.

Kidd stood straight, his face lifted and his eyes burning.

"Nay, touch me not, Davie!" he boomed to the lad who would have embraced him, for there was affection between these two, born of memories of glorious days amid the reek of battle.

Kidd let slip the cloak from his shoulders, revealing round his waist a dark red sash and heavy cutlas, this weapon almost concealing his own dress sword. Disengaging the sash, he threw the cutlas to the younger man. Davie looked at Kidd with a perplexed shake of his head, but with obedience gained by years of experience, fastened the heavy weapon firmly to his waist. The blade glittered dully in the yellow light of the lantern.

"How now, Captain?" cried Davie shortly.

"I fear we must needs hurry!" Kidd spoke in deep and precise tones.

"Ho! Ho!" chuckled Davie as at a subtle jest. "To what end? When Captain Kidd runs amuck in Newgate what need is there to hurry?"

Kidd held up a restraining hand.

"Jest not, Davie," he protested. " 'Twas of thee I was thinking. Thou standest in the shadow of the gallows, yet reckest not the scant time till dawn, when thou wilt hang."

" 'Tis no disgrace to hang with Kidd," cried the younger man with feeling, "and since they have not hanged thee, what's to do?"

Davie now gave little thought to the fact that Captain Kidd was here armed and unescorted by an overbearing jailer. 'Twas, perchance, strange, but he was willing to accept the situation in silence, content to abide in patience till things were, anon, made plain. 'Twas enough that Kidd was here. He would learn in time the why and wherefore of it; meantime he awaited orders unquestioningly, as always.

Kidd gently rubbed his throat. " 'Tis not my plan that thou shalt hang, Davie. 'Tis my hope to get thee well clear of this hole; then is my errand ended. Mayhap we will succeed; yet we must strike hard and quickly; of that I am persuaded. Loosen thy blade and mind the slippery flags." He gathered his cloak closely about him and stepped across the threshold into the corridor.

FOR a space Davie followed the other closely, their cautious footsteps echoing eerily, and their light

throwing ghastly shadows on the rafters overhead. The place was damp and chilly and silent. Aye, thought Davie, Newgate was a vile place.

Finally Kidd paused, and carefully stepping over a twisted figure huddled in a pool of blood, half turned and held the light.

" 'Twas necessary, lad," he muttererd hoarsely and the younger man nodded understandingly. "Look to the stairs!"

They ascended four steps of rough masonry and stood before a heavy door. Kidd now snuffed the light within the lantern and they were left amid the inky blackness of the passage. As his rescuer slowly pushed the door ajar, Davie started forward with a sense of impending expectation.

The place was as black as the grave; not a glimmer of light shone in the room. Davie, ill-acquainted with the intricate interiors of Newgate, had difficulty in clinging close to Kidd, and in the absolute darkness lost him more than once. Their eery and mysterious position was terrifying in its possibilities. The inequalities of the pavement retarded their progress, while a chasm of denser darkness threatened ambuscades. Davie, bewildered, became certain of one thing. He could hear the labored breathing of men. They were passing through a guardroom.

Kidd, with an uncanny sense of familiarity, gained some notion of the whereabouts of the door, and Davie hoped speedily to find himself well away; but he reckoned without that chapter of accidents which was to make this night memorable above all others in his career.

Reaching the door they listened intently. The rain had ceased, with the rumble of thunder growing fainter and fainter. Aside from the moaning of the wind another sound came from without. Slowly Kidd raised the latch that secured the door and silently he drew it open. Outside in the huge doorway a lone guard paced sleepily back and forth. 'Twas possible they might have evaded his notice, but unfortunately Davie's foot rolled upon a pebble, he fell against the wall with an ejaculation, and his scabbard clanked noisily on the stone flagging. From the side of the doorway the guard picked up a lantern and slowly advanced toward the source of the disturbance he had heard. His sword unsheathed, Kidd stepped out to confront him.

Verily, never in all his experience had this guard encountered anything which approached in acute and sustained horror this apparition he beheld within the yellow rays of the upheld lantern. With quivering limbs he stared as if at a nightmare, his ashen-gray face and bulging eyes glistening grotesquely in the reflected rays of his light.

Anon he found his voice.

"Kidd!" he screamed. "Captain Kidd!"

The lantern crashed to the flagging and the man was off, his cries for the captain of the guard mingling with the screaming of the wind.

"'Od's blood!" cried Kidd. "The fellow will raise the guard. To the gate, lad!" Davie felt the icy coldness of the hand that clutched his own. "Follow close and fast, Davie, for now we play at bowls with destiny!"

As they hastened after the guard the wind smote them with a mad howl of exultation, a sullen roar of encouragement. Betimes in their flight Davie was concerned with the certain strangeness attached to Kidd, and bethought him of the strenge actions of the guard; yet was there no answer to his increasing perplexity. Nor did he trouble to analyze. He was minded foremost with the question of whether or not they would escape.

Against the buffeting wind they

reached the gate. The guard, awakened by the clamor of their fellow, appeared in the sooty gloom of the guardhouse. Two storm lanterns, one on each side of the gate, cast a small circle of illumination around its base. Here the four burly forms of the guards ran about confusedly.

"Through them, Davie, and unbar the gate!" roared Kidd in the youth's ear. "I'll tend this mangy crew!"

"Aye!" cried Davie, leaping forward. He lusted for the clash of steel; for the fierce hand-to-hand struggle that stirred the blood; for the reckless victory that would lift them from this hell-hole and make men of them once more. But Kidd was ahead of him. With sword in hand he had jumped full in the center of their foes. Before he had recovered his balance he parried the slash of a broadsword and pricked an antagonist in the throat. Davie, before he could break through, found himself confronted by a huge fellow, who swung savagely at him with his weapon. Their blades met with a shower of sparks.

Davie, no novice, sliced and parried with his cutlas till he severed his opponent's arm. Kidd, as Davie reached the gate, beat down a leveled pistol, inclined his head to avoid a murderous blow, ran the man through and almost in the same breath stepped a pace to the right to engage the fourth opponent—and all this with the cool precision of a fencing-master, unhurried, a flush of obvious enjoyment on his pallid cheeks.

Davie raised the heavy bar and turned to see the last man fall. As Kidd ran toward him there came sounds of confusion from the jail, and with all haste they pushed wide the gate and were soon without the walls.

"To horse!" cried Kidd, his voice hollow, though not without a ring of triumph. He led the way across the cobbled street to the darkest shadows of some trees. Two horses stamped restlessly, bridled and saddled.

"Thou must make London, lad, and the 'Kerrigan Arms.' Friends await thee there." Kidd's voice was lost amid the shrieking wind.

"And thou?" questioned Davie as he mounted.

"Begone!" cried Kidd. "I follow close!"

In the teeth of the wind Davie rode toward London. Betimes he could hear hoofbeats behind him, but soon the voice of the wind was become a sullen animal roar, riven at intervals by distant crashes of thunder, and as the roar became a howl, a clamor, anon the hoofbeats died away.

DAVIE BARTMEY crossed the sanded floor of the taproom to where two men sat silent and gloomy.

"Bentley! Cotton!" he exclaimed joyfully. The men addressed came out of their revery in a flash and looked into the face of the newcomer.

"Thou!" gasped the one called Bentley. "Alive? We thought thee hanged. How comes it, Davie?"

Cotton stared in silence, unbelieving, his very gaze betokening interrogation.

"With Kidd's assistance I escaped from Newgate this night past."

"Impossible!" retorted Bentley, while Cotton drew askance.

"Nay, 'tis a fact," insisted Davie. "Side by side we hacked our way to freedom. Even now Kidd follows close behind me."

For a time there was silence. Cotton glanced at Bentley as if seeking understanding, but finding none he closed his eyes in bewilderment. Davie noted his friends' strange behavior, but could not guess its purport. At length Bentley, stirring uneasily, lifted his eyes from the floor and turned to Davie.

"Knowest not that Kidd was executed yesterday at dawn?"

"'Tis a lie!" cried Davie.

"Nay," said Bentley firmly. "We saw him hanged!"

The Red Fetish

by Frank Belknap Long, Jr.

"They writhed in the sun like wounded snakes."

BILL CULLEN shaded his eyes with his hand and stared at the empty skyline. His arms, as he stood in the glittering light, showed scraggy and emaciated and his features were pinched and black. There had been strong winds blowing and enormous seas thundering on the beach, and the ferocity of the elements had accentuated his helplessness. He turned to his companion with a gesture of despair.

"Look here," he said, "you know as well as I do that it is physically impossible for us to hang on without water. What do you say to a swim?"

Bill's companion groaned and shook his head. He was a frightened, nervous little man with pointed fox-like ears, and people who knew him were prone to brand him a coward. His name, Wellington Van Wyck, did not raise him in the estimation of his friends.

Bill studied regretfully the thing that Van Wyck had become. It was not the lack of water that gave him discomfort. His sorrow lay in the fact that Van Wyck did not possess a capacity for blind enthusiasm.

"It's only six miles," he urged.

"There are cannibals on that island," replied Van Wyck. "It's down on the chart."

Van Wyck was a little wild and he imagined that cannibals tore themselves to pieces over their ceremonies. Bill knew that cannibals were decent and clean and orderly; but there was no explaining that to Van Wyck. He dealt with him in another fashion.

"You're as weak and flabby and spineless as a jelly-fish with rheuma-

tism," said Bill. "You're so unsavory that the cannibals wouldn't eat you. Why don't you kill yourself now, and be done with it? 'Twould be a good way to economize on food!"

Van Wyck scowled and sat down upon the beach. His eyes narrowed. "We are safer here," he said. His lips were swollen and cracked and he spoke in a thin, small voice. He assured Bill that he could survive without luxuries. He said that two men could go three days on one pint of water, and that in three or four days anything might happen.

Nothing did happen. The three days went by like great white birds at sea, and the merciless glare of the sun made life a perfect misery. Bill looked grim. He squatted on the sands and watched the pale blue water foaming and bubbling in the lagoon, and his eyes glittered. Once he turned to Van Wyck and laughed. "It has green eyes," he said. "I saw it watching us on the beach. It plays with the moon and its tentacles are long and gelatinous!"

Sea water affects some men like hashish. That morning Bill had crawled to the lagoon on his hands and knees and swallowed more salt than was good for him. Van Wyck had warned him that it wasn't done, but Bill was of the disbelieving sort.

Bill's clothes were in tatters, and he found no satisfaction in contemplating the leanness of his wrists and ankles. Whenever he held up his wrists for inspection they shook so violently that he let himself be guided by sentiment and wept. His ankles were no wider than broomsticks, and when he tried to walk he could hear them crack. He didn't want to turn them, so he sat down and talked to Van Wyck. He made an effort to be agreeable.

"I'll concede that the cannibals may eat us," he said. "There is always that risk. But I don't see why they should; and it's only a six-mile swim. If we stay here I can't trust myself."

Van Wyck recoiled and his under lip trembled. Bill laid a merciful hand upon his emaciated shoulder. "There isn't anything that I want to keep from you," he said. "I'll tell you the truth. For three days I've been planning to kill you. I lay awake last night and watched you. I thought: 'This thirst—this dreadful thirst'—*he* would put an end to it!"

Van Wyck shivered, and tears ran down his face and dampened his brittle red beard. His small blue eyes dilated with horror. Hot shame flushed red over his throat and ears. "But you wouldn't really eat me?" he moaned.

"I don't know," replied Bill. "That's why I suggest the swim. It's six miles and we're atrociously weak; but anything to keep from thinking of *that*!"

Bill knew that Van Wyck understood and sympathized. Van Wyck had a knife, which he kept hidden, but in his sleep he frequently took it out and felt the edge of it. Bill had been very much horrified, and he had not pretended to misunderstand the expression on Van Wyck's face. There was something brazen in Van Wyck's affrightment when he discovered that two could play the same sinister game.

The sun was setting and a few gray wisps of clouds were fleeing like flakes of snow across the blue sky. A single gull careened and dipped far out in the tumbling black immensity of ocean. A great silence had fallen upon the atoll, and the stubborn struggle between the two men drew to an issue before the first wild rush of stars. Van Wyck felt unsafe in the presence of Bill Cullen, and he made no effort to conceal his fear.

"Let's get away from here as quickly as possible," he pleaded.

"You were right. Six or seven miles isn't a long swim. If we strip, we can make it."

Bill extended his hand. It was like a dead thing, but Van Wyck seized it and wrung it warmly. His voice quivered. "It isn't a long swim, old fellow," he repeated.

Bill made a grimace. "It might rain," he said.

"It won't rain," responded Van Wyck.

That settled it. They spent the evening getting ready. They hid their anguish in a bustle of preparation. Bill scurried about and secured three clams. The unfortunate bivalves were devoured with immoderate ferocity. Even their stiff, rubber-like necks afforded grist for the mill of Van Wyck's teeth. It grieved Bill to see the shells go to waste. They sat down and congratulated themselves for the first time in a week. The clams seemed to make their situation less hopeless, but they did not on that account decide to remain on the island. Their thirst was abnormal and monstrous. It was not a thing to be talked about.

They managed to get some sleep; but they awoke with their throats on fire. The game that they had played was over. But they avoided the thought of their new plan as much as possible, since they did not want the possibility of fatal consequences to look them in the face.

A chill in the atmosphere generally preceded the customary heat of the day; and the coldness now seemed unusually severe. They got together a few sticks and built a fire. The sun had not yet risen, but the island was immersed in the ghostly gray light of early dawning. They saw everything vividly. The boulders on the beach seemed alive. A light wind furred the steel-gray sea with tiny ripples.

"We mustn't waste time," said Van Wyck. It was obvious that his dread of Bill had grown in the night. Bill's threat had taken complete possession of his shriveled, selfish little brain. His teeth chattered over the fire and he planned a thousand assaults on the man beside him. His fingers clutched frantically at the knife which he kept hidden; but he lacked the stomach for malicious manslaughter. He feared that his cowardice might betray him into a false or dangerous move, and he endeavored to conquer his hysteria with loud boasts.

"It was all poppycock, our worrying about the cannibals," he announced. "The thing for us to do is to put on a bold front. They'll make gods of us!"

In the present condition of his mind these words produced a curious effect on Bill. He waved his arms wildly, and swore at the sky. "Yes," he shouted, "they'll do that. But sometimes they're not satisfied with a living man. They're head-hunters, you know. They have a way of removing the skull from a man's head, and drying it up, and worshiping it. They have a predilection for red hair and beards. When they find both on one head they go wild."

Bill looked directly at Van Wyck. The latter could scarcely stand. He was swaying hysterically back and forth and running his fingers through his bristling red beard. "Perhaps I could shave it off before we start," he wailed.

"With what?" demanded Bill.

"With the clam shells," cried Van Wyck, dejectedly seeking to grasp some straw that would save his head.

"I refuse to permit it," said Bill. "It's time we started. It wouldn't be pleasant to swim in the full glare of the sun."

They stripped and rolled their clothes into neat, round balls. Somehow it did not seem right to abandon them helter-skelter on the beach. They had a vague idea that they might return for them. They de-

posited them gingerly beneath the one coco palm, and walking solemnly to the water's edge they scowled into the clouded mirror of sea before them.

THE water was like ice, and Bill shivered and stood on one foot. "Walk right in," said Van Wyck. "The cannibals expect us!" His smile was ghastly and indescribable. The blue veins stood out on his scrawny neck, and his forehead was covered with globules of perspiration.

Bill was the first to go into deep water. Van Wyck stood with the icy current swirling about his ankles, and watched him wade out until he stood waist-deep. Bill turned and looked back reproachfully. "You're coming, aren't you?" Bill's disdain and distrust of Van Wyck were forgotten in a momentary need for companionship.

As Van Wyck stood with the cold water numbing his toes he had an irrational desire to turn back and run wildly up the beach, and to stay on the island until thirst finished him off. The risk of the swim seemed suddenly displeasing to him. A mist passed rapidly before his eyes; he ran his fingers through his hair and gulped. But when he saw the pitiful, hurt expression on Bill's face he put aside unworthy thoughts. "I'm coming, Bill," he said.

He walked forward until the water eddied and swirled about his chin. His face was hideously drawn and his eyes bulged, but a forlorn ray of sunlight filtered through the clouds and played about his head, bringing out its latent manliness.

"It's deep, out there," said Bill.

They both lurched forward. The sudden loss of footing accentuated Bill's weakness, and he went under. He felt that his arms and legs were incapable of sustaining him, and he wondered if Van Wyck would try to save him.

He came up and struck out, his mouth full of water. The salt burned his throat and he swallowed. The water went into his stomach. He shivered. The sun beat mercilessly down upon his naked body.

He swam boldly, with a brief sense of triumph. He had conquered his physical weakness. He knew that his strength might not last, but the thought that he had not depended upon Van Wyck gave him secret satisfaction.

He could see Van Wyck's red head on the water several yards ahead of him. The little wretch had evidently made good use of his legs and arms. "Slow up, Van Wyck!" he shouted.

"I don't dare to!" Van Wyck called back. "If I stop I might sink. And think how deep it is!"

Bill resented Van Wyck's reminder. "If you don't ease up," he shouted, "you'll surely go down. This isn't an athletic contest!"

"It is," cried Van Wyck. "It's the greatest ever—even if there are head-hunters at the goal. I advise you to talk to me. It keeps me from thinking. If I think I shall go down."

But Bill did not feel like talking. The water was cold and he had no stomach for repartee. He felt the chill of the depths beneath in his nude limbs. He swallowed great quantities of sea water. He knew that he might suffer eventually, but he did not care. He wanted to reach the island. He had never shared Van Wyck's dread of cannibals, and the thought of the island, with its crystal-clear springs and refreshing fruits, was a precious balm to him.

He wondered if Van Wyck would survive him. The latter was swimming with frightful rapidity, leaving him definitely in the lurch. Bill envied and pitied his little companion. Van Wyck might survive to view the island, with its green, welcome frondage—but would he ever reach it?

Bill had an uncomfortable suspicion that he might sink. His initial courage threatened to give out. A mounting hysteria surged through his brain. He closed his eyes and tried not to think. There was nothing before him but a limitless stretch of malachite sea. He was fascinated and horrified by his isolation. A cold, brilliant sun blinded his eyes and dried up the sap of life in him. The water seemed to thicken, and he had great difficulty in moving his arms and legs.

Bill never knew how he reached the island. For a starving, emaciated man to swim seven miles is tremendous, and deserves some reward. Like most valiant men, Bill was conscious of his own worth. When he sighted the island he said nothing, but he thought: "This is only just. I have paid the price, and I deserve this."

He had also caught up with Van Wyck. The awful glare in the despairing eyes that Van Wyck turned upon him told of a fatigue immeasurable and a desire for water that had passed the bounds of sanity. Van Wyck's eyes were living pools of liquid fire. His voice was hoarse and rasping, and he turned over and over in the water; and twice his head went under.

They were horribly near when they sighted the cannibals. Van Wyck saw them first. He was puffing and wailing, and he had been swimming on his back, and when he turned over and sighted them his face took on the aspect of an open wound. His mouth became an awful gash in a grotesque, streaked horror of countenance.

"Bill," he called hoarsely. "It's worse than we thought. There are hundreds of 'em!"

Fixing his frightened and horrified eyes on the shore, Bill trod water, and became suddenly very angry. The scene before him burned itself on his brain, and robbed him of his victory. He felt that the fates had taken an indecent advantage of him. His anger mounted, and flushed his neck and throat. "Damn their black hides!" he muttered.

A clamor and a stench arose from the rocks. The cannibals seemed to be recovering from a drinking-bout. They writhed in the sun like wounded snakes. Bill counted sixty or seventy. Their bodies were hideously tattooed, and they wore monstrous shell rings through their ears and noses. The women joined with the men in dancing and spitting venom. The hubbub was deafening. Ages of savagery and blood had shaped them into capering devils. They were all the more terrible because they had seen other white men. Bill did not expect much from them. He confessed a frank horror at the situation.

"If we only had something to give 'em," he groaned.

Van Wyck had somehow expected Bill to rally and come to his support. He needed a moral prop and he noted with horror that Bill had lost his solid, comforting manner. Van Wyck's lips were so dry that he could scarcely get his tongue to shape words of rebuff.

"I don't like it," he finally blurted out. "They certainly mean business. You might swim in and test 'em!"

"Don't be an ass!" roared Bill.

"All right, then. But if one of us doesn't swim in, both of us are goners And since I've never talked with savages I'm hardly the man. You have a way with you. You could pacify a Java ape-man! Get 'em laughing—tell 'em a funny story!"

Bill protested venomously. "Those cannibals aren't children," he groaned. "You can't spoof 'em. This is serious business, Van Wyck."

Van Wyck refused to be convinced and he would have gone on urging Bill to commit suicide to save his own precious skin if something had

not made all conversation ridiculous. They both saw it at the same time. They looked at each other and said nothing. Then Van Wyck began frantically swimming toward the rocks.

The fin divided the water into two glassy walls. As it passed along it turned the dark surface to shining quicksilver. Bill had barely grasped the meaning of it when something touched his ankles and he knew that the water was infested. He gave a sudden, defiant shriek.

But the sharks did not molest him. They made straight for Van Wyck. They approached in vicious circles, and Bill saw the whites of their stomachs through the dark green water. The mouth of the largest opened and closed; and then there followed a clashing of teeth that sounded like the clanging to of iron-clad portcullises.

Once the horrible gray back of the fish showed above the surface, and glittered lethally in the sun, and Bill knew that Van Wyck was done for. Van Wyck was almost near enough to the rocks to climb them, and he might reasonably have pushed the shark off with his foot, but Bill knew that he wouldn't. Bill knew that Van Wyck was as good as eaten, and he thought: "That shark will hardly be content with Van Wyck alone!"

A dozen fins intersected on the surface and occasionally one of the ravenous monsters would jump clear of the water in its eagerness to taste satisfying human flesh.

The sight got in under Bill's skin and hurt. He closed his eyes, and endeavored to think of the grinning, leering savages on the rocks. The sharks made frantic dashes at Van Wyck and came away with something in their mouths. They would rush forward, their great jaws would snap—and there would be less and less of Van Wyck.

Bill was unable to keep his eyes shut. He tried to cover them with his hands, but then he would go under and get an extra mouthful of salt water. He came up gasping, and saw that the sea was streaked with crimson.

As the sharks darted away from Van Wyck they left dark red trails behind them. Bill heard Van Wyck's screams distinctly, although the latter had reached a point where screams seemed futile. They became less and less coherent. Perhaps Van Wyck realized the absurdity of protest. Perhaps he realized that all things eventually work together for the best. Certainly the cannibals would have treated him worse. It is not pleasant to be boiled in oil or hacked to pieces with little knives.

Bill saw the last of Van Wyck disappear in the maw of an enormous shark. The water turned a deeper red, and for a moment the sky and sea and even the naked, gesticulating savages seemed bathed in a crimson aura. It may have been an optical illusion, since Bill's eyes had ceased to function with clarity. Bill knew that the sharks would look about a bit after finishing Van Wyck, and the thought gave him no satisfaction. "You're next on the list," he told himself.

But somehow the sharks seemed satisfied with poor Van Wyck. Perhaps they found Van Wyck so unsavory that they did not care to risk tackling another of the same breed. They circled about for a few minutes after the last of Van Wyck had disappeared, and then they passed solemnly eastward, their fins glistening in the brilliant sunlight.

Meanwhile Bill trod water and shuddered when he thought of Van Wyck. But he didn't let himself think of Van Wyck much after that. Van Wyck, he argued, was no longer in need of sympathy. "It is the living who have to suffer," he thought. It was patent that he could enjoy no security in waters infested with man-eating sharks.

He shouted with delight when he discovered that the cannibals had disappeared from the rocks. He was forcefully tempted to swim in and take advantage of his amazing good fortune. But he thought better of that when he calmly considered the nature of cannibals. They were probably waiting behind the rocks for him to swim in, and he didn't care to be boiled in oil when there were sharks to make a quicker, cleaner job of it.

He decided to attempt to round the island. His ability to keep afloat amazed and frightened him. He had evidently drawn upon some reserve strength that nature had hitherto wilfully concealed. Destiny had played him a new hand. He secretly congratulated himself, although he continued to curse fate for the cannibals.

HE GOT around the island somehow. The current set to at the northern end and he had some difficulty in surmounting the backwash of black tidal water; but he finally reached a beach so clean and white and refreshing that he shouted with boyish eagerness and gratification. He swam in without reckoning consequences, for in his exultation he had forgotten or overlooked the cannibals.

He would build a fire and warm himself, and he would eat nothing but fruit. It needed but a momentary inspection to convince him that the island contained an excess of fruit. And there was water! A tiny streamlet came out from the woods, between the boles of fabulously ancient trees, and ran down the smooth white beach.

Bill swam in and clambered up the beach. He sat down under a hotoo tree, an absurd horror of bones and wet, clinging sand. He was a living scarecrow come out of the sea with the wisdom and weariness of ancient ocean upon him. He could scarcely open and close his thick, black lips. His sun-baked skin was drawn painfully taut over his protruding ribs.

A steady surf was crashing on the beach, and he paused while he listened to the roar of the breakers. He reposed for a time; then he got up, and a peal of wild laughter came from between his swollen lips. He had won out! He had hoodwinked the cannibals and sharks! In that blazing crystal world of sunlight and water he came to life again.

The sun dried him. He gulped up gallons of water from the tiny streamlet. It was fresh and clear. He was genuinely elated. The wind swept in from the sea in great, steady gusts, and the flaffing breeze whistled through his hair and under his armpits. He shouted and danced in sheer joy. The cannibals, he assured himself, were on the other side of the island. It was a large island, and he could hide. The chances against him, he thought, were negligible.

He decided to look about for a hiding-place. He knew that in the vast forest of tangled vegetation he would have no difficulty in achieving utter concealment. He could hoard up fruits and coconuts and live unmolested for days.

But when he turned he saw something peering from between the boles of the distorted, antique trees that made him change his mind. He stood still in the center of the beach, and stared, and presently he saw black, hideous figures come forward into the clearing. Others appeared crawling toward him on their hands and knees. He realized then the absurdity of attempting any sort of concealment.

He stood stark still while the cannibals advanced toward him across the smooth, white sands. He began to envy Van Wyck. He knew too much about savages. He had that and his imagination to blame for the little hell that he endured. How

could he guess that they did not want revenge? A savage considers everything an insult. He knew that he should not have landed upon their infernal island. He wanted to apologize to them, and to make them understand. He had no desire to lord it over them, and he admitted to himself that he had deliberately injured their sense of dignity.

At first he thought that they intended to make short work of him. They looked sinister. There were three dozen of them in the guard of honor that advanced toward him across the beach and he did not like their faces. Their faces were black and swollen and ugly and incredibly tattooed, and their cheeks were smeared with green and blue paint. One of them paraded a discarded panama hat. Bill could not imagine where he had obtained the hat. The wretch had probably repaid the owner by boiling him in oil. It was quite the thing twenty years ago to burn traders and missionaries in oil, although the custom has been outgrown among respectable savages. But the hat looked at least twenty years old. And one of the devils smoked a corncob pipe! They were tall, solemn-looking cusses, and Bill did not pretend to like them.

But when they got close to him they formed a circle, shutting him off from the sea, and he felt then that everything was worse than he had anticipated. When cannibals begin forming into rings it is customary to give up hope. They were grinning hideously and Bill could count the number of teeth in the rings which they wore about their necks.

Some of the leanest and tallest wore thirty or forty teeth. And Bill knew that a savage never wears more than one tooth from a single head. It is not considered decent. And each tooth means—but Bill never wept over spilt milk. He felt that his own head was in imminent danger, and the knowledge annoyed and frightened him. But he did not dare let on that he feared them, and he stood up very stiff and straight, and scowled into their narrow, bloodshot eyes.

They seemed to resent his hostility. It seemed to hurt them, and Bill was amazed at the hint of reproach in their glances. A cannibal is something of a gentleman, and he would not deliberately hurt a man's feelings for the world. And Bill's resentment somehow seemed an insult to their hospitality. Bill understood how they felt, and he realized that he had behaved like a boor. But his teeth were knocking together like billiard balls, and a stern front was necessary.

But he could not look his captors in the face. They came close to him, and then one of them stepped forward and patted him on the back. He spoke and Bill understood him. Bill knew nearly all of the Bantu languages, and the savage spoke a corruption of several.

"We thank our brother for the very fine gift," he said. "We are indeed grateful!"

Although Bill could understand what the black devil said a reply was utterly beyond him. The grammatical construction of Bantu overwhelmed him. Bill kept his mouth shut and stared, pretending not to understand.

The spokesman turned and beckoned. A tall, lean youth with protruding yellow teeth came quickly forward. Save for a slight hint of pity in his small eyes his face bore no expression. He held in his right hand a large, round object which Bill did not immediately recognize. The spokesman nodded and took the object by its hair. He stroked it effusively, calling upon it to protect and succor him in war and in peace. He begged that the object's pity and benevolence would extend to the whole tribe. He praised

the object in terms that would have embarrassed any living man. Then he turned to Bill and made a very low bow. "It came ashore before you," he said. "And we are most grateful!"

Bill opened his eyes wide with horror. He sought to express his agony in words, but no sound came from between his black, swollen lips. A sudden shriek would perhaps have saved him, and Bill tried hard to make a sound in his throat. But his horror lay too heavily upon him. He made a wild, horrid gesture with his right arm and collapsed in a heap upon the sand.

Three months later Bill was taken off by a trading-sloop. He blabbered idiotically about the right of a head to decent burial and made uncomplimentary allusions to the wearing of teeth. He evidently sought to stir up anger against the cannibals, but the traders ignored his insinuations, since he was obviously mad and since the cannibals had worshiped him and given him the run of the island. The memory of Van Wyck's encrimsoned head had addled his wits.

A Brief Weird Story Is

A Matter of Sight

By AUGUST W. DERLETH

"PERHAPS you have been in Vienna?"

"Yes," I said slowly. "Yes, I have been in Vienna."

For a moment there was silence in the car. I took another good look at the man who had chosen to sit beside me rather than to take one of the many empty seats. He wore a well-trimmed Vandyke beard, which was as black as the long wavy hair on his uncovered head. His nose was sharply aquiline. His eyes were hidden by very large, black glasses, attached to a somewhat blacker cord of an expensive make. He wore a long black cape, buttoned tightly about the neck, where a black silk muffler stuck out. His left hand rested on the gold top of a very fine walking-stick which I would have given much to possess; the tapering fingers of his right were engaged in tapping a cigarette on the sill of the open window.

"Then you have seen the famous Hapsburg Palace?"

"Oh! yes," said I. "That is what most Americans go to Vienna for."

"Yes, I suppose it is so. That and beer—very fine beer in Vienna. You have tasted it, of course? And eaten bologna, I'll wager."

"Both." I laughed.

"You liked the palace?"

"Very much. A sumptuous place. I just read somewhere that part of it was recently destroyed by fire."

"An unfortunate occurrence."

"Very. It is really a magnificent structure."

"And did you promenade in the park?"

"Quite right." I laughed again. "Routine for the American tourist."

"There are many things to see in the park."

"Stately trees."

He waved them away with the hand that held the cigarette. He frowned a little.

"Have you ever heard of second sight?"

"Second sight? Yes, certainly."

"And of Argazila and his fourth dimension?"

"Argazila?" I could not place the name. Argazila? . . . What did this man have to sit beside me for!

"You do not know him? Few do. He was—he is—what is one to say? was, is, will be—they are all so alike out there." He flung his arm upward and outward. "He is a Persian; little known, I daresay, but of whose importance the world shall soon know. Now, he is nothing; only a few, a very few, know."

I said nothing. There was nothing I could have said.

"It is to the fourth dimension that I refer when I say that there is much to see in the park. Everything that was and will be *is* in the fourth dimension. You see?"

I nodded hopefully, but I certainly did not see.

"It is interesting to go through the park probing the fourth dimension. One can easily see Maria Theresa walking about with Francis as a little boy."

"Yes?" I decided to humor him. One does not often come across so rare a specimen of an intoxicated man. But he really did not act it. His talk, though . . .

"In Paris I saw the French Revolution re-enacted. Let me tell you that the real man behind that catastrophe, the man who spurred on Robespierre, Danton, Marat, and the others, was that famous charlatan known as Count Cagliostro."

"Yes?" said I again. I really could not think of anything else to say. What would you have said?

"Anyone would have enjoyed seeing Napoleon march through Paris." For a few minutes he was silent.

"Look!" said I, pointing to a brakeman signaling us with a red lantern. "Look at that man's face!" The train was slowly starting to move. "He could be reading a newspaper."

"Yes, he could very well be reading a newspaper. I like the way his mouth turns down at the corners; as if he were reading something unpleasant."

For a moment the brakeman was outlined in the light of a side-tracked train. He looked so small. The stranger again started to speak; he did not appear to have looked at the brakeman, and yet . . .

"You have probably been in Pisa?"

"And have seen the tower? Yes," said I, "I have."

"I saw them building it." The man didn't sound drunk. Perhaps his mind . . . ? Sometimes, you know, you do find one or two; perfectly harmless if humored.

"Yes?" I said again. It irritated me that I said it; one would think that I had absolutely no vocabulary. But in such a position . . .

"I watched the succession of the Ptolemies from the death of Alexander the Great to the last of them. You should see Cleopatra. She isn't really so wonderful; I've seen a good many girls—there's one just ahead—that leave Cleopatra in the distance."

I wasn't going to say "yes" again; so I held my peace. So did he. Irritating, he could be. Perhaps if I said it in French?

"Yes?" I said at last. I thought of all the blame that rested on Argazila's shoulders.

"I saw the building of Rome; the destruction of Carthage. I saw Hannibal, Scipio, Massinissa, Cæsar,

Anthony—all of them. Nero interested me immensely; so did Caligula. They actually did burn the Christians; great sport they made of it."

The annoying affirmative stood on the tip of my tongue.

"Damn!" said I loudly. The girl in front looked around with raised eyebrows.

"Odd that you shouldn't want to say 'yes,'" said the stranger. "Such an easy word." How did he know that I didn't want to say yes? He continued. "That question, too, is simple. Your thoughts make vivid telepathic impressions."

The train flew past a small village.

"What village was that?" asked the stranger casually.

"I couldn't say," I replied, somewhat nettled. "I find it difficult enough to keep in mind the main stations here and on the Continent. However, I'm sure we're very near Dover."

"That is where I get off."

"And I."

For a while the stranger was silent. About thirty miles from Dover he began again.

"You know, second sight wouldn't be possible if it were not for the vibrations sent out by matter."

"Yes?"

"Yes. Everything sends out vibrations. Future and past events send out vibrations—in the fourth dimension, of course."

"But how can you get into this fourth dimension?"

"Telepathy, my dear sir. One merely projects thought waves into the fourth dimension."

I wondered whether or not to turn this man over to the authorities; certainly he was demented! What else could account for his conversation. I have never heard a conversation so outré.

"Have you traveled much?" There was a disconcerting smile on his lips—almost as if I had secretly told him my thoughts.

"Oh, a bit. Mostly in Europe, however."

"Never been to China?"

"No."

"I went to China years ago. I studied the history of China in the fourth dimension from far beyond the Hsia Dynasty, about 2300 B. C., to the present day. The civilization of ancient China has never been equaled. Collectors become very enthusiastic over original Ming pottery; they should see Shan pottery. You would have liked to see Shih-Hwang-Ti engineer the building of the Great Wall of China."

A brakeman stuck his head into the car and shouted, "Dover!" The stranger jumped up before the train stopped and got out into the aisle. He tapped the toe of his shoe with his ebony cane.

"Yes," he said. "I liked China. I had a horrible experience there, by the way."

The brakeman stuck his head into the car and shouted again; I remembered that over here brakemen were called guards. The train began to slow down. I got up slowly and reached for my portfolio.

"I was in the Boxer Rebellion of 1900," he began again. Both of us moved out onto the platform. In the semi-darkness the stranger turned to me. "The Chinese are most diabolical at times—especially in the way they torture their prisoners."

"Yes?" said I for the last time.

"Yes. Look what they did to me!"

With a sudden jerk at the black cord he pulled the glasses from his face. For a moment he confronted me; then he jumped from the still moving train into the night. I fell back against the wall of the car, my grip tightening convulsively on the iron railing. I think I screamed; I do not quite remember.

For where his eyes should have been, there were two black pits!

An Out-of-the-Ordinary Story Is This

The Tabernacle

By HENRY S. WHITEHEAD

KAZMIR STROD knelt very low in his seat in the pine pew of St. Stanislas' Church just after he had come back from the altar rail, so low, by purpose, that no one up there at the altar, not Father Gregoreff nor any of the acolytes, could possibly see him. The clean handkerchief which he had taken to church, unfolded, was still in his left hand where he had put it, somewhat damp because of his emotion and the fact that it was a warm April day. It was, indeed, so warm that his bees had swarmed the evening before and he had got them, successfully, into the new hive.

The Holy Host remained intact, between his teeth, held lightly. He felt sure that It was not even damp, because he had carefully wiped his lips and teeth, in that same low-kneeling posture, with the clean handkerchief just before rising, genuflecting, proceeding to the altar.

He placed the handkerchief over his mouth now and to the accompaniment of several brief prayers took the Host from his mouth. He held It, very gently, the Sanctissimum, in the clean handkerchief. He felt very strange. He had never done such a thing before.

Bending now, very low, he felt for the small, thin wafer inside the clean handkerchief's folds, broke off a tiny piece, and placed It in his mouth. He must receive Holy Communion or it would be further sacrilege. He swallowed It, with difficulty, for his mouth, under this stress, had remained very dry. He said the prayers of Reception with his mind on them, but as rapidly as he could. He did not leave out a word of those prayers.

Then, and only then, he slipped the handkerchief into his pocket. He was kneeling upright, like the rest of the congregation, the men with shining newly shaved faces, the women, on the other side of the central alleyway, with multicolored shawls over their sleek heads, when Father Gregoreff was turning toward the congregation at the end of the Mass.

"*Ite, missa est,*" boomed Father Gregoreff, and turned to the altar's end for the Last Gospel.

Kazmir spoke to nobody on the way home. That, too, he imagined, would be sacrilegious, for, like a priest, he was carrying the Sanctissimum upon him.

He went straight to the new hive. There were almost no flowers out at this time of year. On the broad landing-board, several dozens of bees were lined up in rows, like little soldiers, finishing the sugar-and-water honey he had placed for them to keep them

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This is a very ancient tale, running back far into the early history of religion in Europe. It has cropped up, traditionally, in many lands and in various periods. Members of the older religions will understand its implications without explanations. To those unversed in the traditional belief concerning the *Sanctissimum* (the consecrated bread of Holy Communion among the older, Catholic, religions), it may be mentioned that this bread, known as the Host, is, after consecration at the hands of a validly ordained priest, understood to be "really" the Body of the Lord. The type of this "reality" varies among different theologians, but the belief in the essential identity of the consecrated Host with the True Body, with all the implications which follow this belief, is general. As the Lord (Jesus) is Lord of the Universe according to ancient Christian belief, His Body should be sacred to all His creatures. Hence this very ancient tradition which is here told in a modern setting.—Henry S. Whitehead, Ph.D., F.A.G.S.

in the hive where he had placed them last night. He was sure the new queen was within. She would be, of course, in the center of the swarm, and he had lifted them, very carefully, off the bush where they had swarmed, into the new hive. It had been an unusually large swarm. He had worn his high rubber boots, his bricklayer's gloves, and a folded net about his head over his cap. Even so, he had had a few stings.

He was going to make this hive the greatest hive there was! He was going to use old, old "magic," the way it had been done in the Old Country, for luck and for the success of a vegetable garden, and for many other good purposes, even though it was, good purpose and all, sacrilege. God didn't mind such things. It was only the priests who objected. A little bit of the Host placed inside the hive. That was all. That would make the bees prosper, bring luck to the new hive. Over here, in America, you didn't hear so much about doing things like that. But Kazmir knew what to do for bees. Those old-time ways were good ways. They worked. The Holy Host had many virtues. Along with garlic-flowers it was a sure safeguard from vampires. Placed in a coffin, he had heard, It kept the body from decay. With even a tiny crumb of It, wrapped tightly in a piece of clean linen, sewed into your clothes, It was sure proof against the Bad-Eye.

There was practically no sound inside the hive. The bees on the landing-board moved slowly, lethargically. If this heat held, there would be flowers soon, and he could discontinue the sugar-and-water "honey." Too much of that and the bees laid off working! Bees were like humans, very much like humans, only dumber! They never took a rest, had no relaxations.

He raised the hive's top, carefully, leaned it against the side of the packing-box on which the hive itself stood. There were the frames, just as he had placed them yesterday, a little old comb, for the bees to build onto, near the middle. That was all right. He removed the crushed bodies of several bees which had got caught when he had placed the top on the hive in yesterday's dusk of evening. The new queen would be down inside there, somewhere, surrounded by her eager, devoted workers, the swarm which had accompanied her out of the older hive yesterday.

Kazmir crossed himself, furtively, and glanced around. Nobody was looking; indeed nobody was, at the moment, in sight. He took the handkerchief out of his pocket, touched his right thumb and the index finger to his lips reverently, extracted the Sanctissimum and dropped It into the open hive between the frames. Then he replaced the top and went into the house. The bees should prosper now, according to all the old rules. Kazmir had never heard of putting such a charm on bees before. That was his own idea. But—if it worked as the old tales said it worked, for horses and cows and the increase of a flock of goats, why not for bees?

It was a quarter past six by the kitchen clock. Time for the woman and kids to be getting up for seven o'clock Mass. He went up the rough stairs to awaken his wife and their two children. This done, he returned to the kitchen to boil four eggs for his breakfast.

IT TURNED out to be a very quiet hive, the new one. Its bees, too, seemed to be stingers. He received many stings during the summer, more stings than usual, it seemed to him. He had to warn Anna and the children to keep away from it. "They got a lotta pep, them bees," he said, and smiled to himself. It was he, applying an old idea with true American progressiveness, who had "pepped them up". He gave the process this phrase, mentally, without the least thought of incongruity, of irreverence. The efficacy of

the Sanctissimum was the last, the very last thing that Kazmir Strod would have doubted, in the entire scheme of the world's regulations and principles.

It was only occasionally nowadays that Kazmir worked at bricklaying. Ten years before, in the Old Country, he had learned that trade. Always a wilful, strong-headed youth, independent of mind, he had flown in the face of his family custom to learn a trade like that. All his family, near Kovno, had been market-gardeners. That strong-headedness had been responsible for his emigration, too. There had been many disputes between him and his father and older brothers. The strong-headedness and the trade! There were great openings for a good bricklayer in America.

But, since he had married—rather late in life, to this Americanized Anna of his, at twenty-two; he was twenty-seven now — with enough money to buy this place, earned at the bricklaying, he had reverted to his gardening. There wasn't as much in gardening, even with good land like this, and sometimes Anna would nag him to take a job when a contractor offered one, but there were all the deep-rooted satisfactions of the soil; the love of it was bred deep in his blood and bones, and he had a way with tomatoes and early peas and even humdrum potatoes.

This devotion to the soil, he felt, triumphantly, had been amply justified that August. He had an offer to go and be gardener on a great estate, a millionaire's, eighteen miles away. The offer included a house, and the use of what vegetables he needed for his family. He accepted it, and told Anna afterward.

Anna was delighted. He had not been sure of how she would take it, and her delight pleased him enormously. For several days it was like a new honeymoon. He spread it all over the community that he wanted to sell his place.

He got six hundred dollars, cash, more than he had paid for it. There was a couple of thousand dollars worth of improvement which he had dug into its earth, but six hundred dollars was six hundred dollars! The title passed, after a day and a night's wrangling with the purchaser, Tony Dvorcznik, a compatriot. Kazmir and Anna and the children moved their possessions in a borrowed motor-truck.

IT WAS in October that Tony Dvorcznik killed off the bees. Tony did not understand bees, and his wife was afraid of them. He hired Stanislas Bodinski, who was one of Father Gregoreff's acolytes, to do the job for him, for a quarter-share of what honey might be discovered within the four hives. Stanislas Bodinski arrived, with sulfur and netting. Tony and his wife stood at a little distance, watching interestedly; telling each other to watch out for stings; marveling at Stanislas Bodinski's nonchalance, deftly placing his sulfur-candles, rapidly stuffing the horizontal opening above the landing-boards, the edges all around the hive tops.

Stanislas joined them, removing his head-net, and stood with them while the sulfur fumes did their deadly work inside the hives. Later, they all walked over to the hives, Stanislas reassuring Tony's wife. "They ain't no danger now. They're all dead by now. Anyhow, they die after they sting you, but you needn't worry none. Jus' the same, you better keep away a little. They's some bees was out the hives when I stopped up them cracks. They'll be flyin' around, kinda puzzled, now."

The comb was lifted out, to exclamations on the part of Tony's wife, into a row of borrowed milk pans. It piled up, enormously, honey covering the bottoms of the pans viscidly.

"You'd wonder where it all come from," said Tony's wife, again and again, "outa them little hives! You

wouldn't think they'd hold that much stuff, would ya?"

Stanislas Bodinski arrived at the last hive, with two remaining milk pans, and proceeded to lift the top away from the hive. They saw him look in. Then he stopped and looked close. Then he stepped back, raised his arms in an amazing gesture of wonderment, sank to his knees beside the hive, and made the sign of the cross on his breast many times.

Wonderingly, they approached, Tony's wife murmuring:

"What's *bifin'* him? Is he gone loony, huh?" Then: "Hey, Tony, they mus' be somethin' awful strange in that-there hive, huh—for Stan to ac' that way!"

There was indeed something strange in the hive, although there was very little honey in it. They did not dare touch it, and, after Stanislas had somewhat recovered himself, and put back the top with hands shaking, the three of them, just as they stood, Tony's wife not even taking off her apron, started for the rectory, to get Father Gregoreff.

The priest came, rather grumblingly, Stanislas following half a block behind the other three. He had run into the sacristy to get the priest's cope and a stole, and something which he had to hold onto, in his pocket, to keep it quiet! He hoped Father Gregoreff would not look behind him and see what he was carrying. He was a bit of a mystic, this Stanislas; otherwise he would not, perhaps, have continued to be an acolyte after he was nineteen. He, too, had come from near Kovno, like Kazmir Strod. Stanislas had listened to strange tales in his earlier boyhood, back there in the Old Country.

He came in through Tony Dvoreznik's gate well behind the rest, furtively. They were all standing, looking at the hive, when he came around the corner of the house. He walked around them, knelt before his priest, seized and kissed his hand. He handed the amazed Father Gregoreff his stole, and the priest put it on mechanically, murmuring, "What's this? what's all this?" Stanislas rose, hastily invested his pastor with the white cope, and stepped over to the hive. He knelt, and turning to the others, motioned them, authoritatively, to kneel also. They did so, all three, the priest's cope trailing on the ground, a few feet behind Stanislas.

Stanislas, making the sign of the cross, reached his arms into the hive. Carefully, the sweat running down his face, he lifted out a shining yellow, new-wax structure, intact, with infinite care. He turned, still on his knees, and placed what he had lifted in the priest's hands. It was a little church, made of wax, made by the bees whose dead bodies, suffocated by sulfur fumes, now littered the dead hive.

Then Stanislas took the sacring bell from his left-hand pocket, and, his head on the ground, rang it to indicate to all who might be within earshot that they should prostrate themselves before the Sanctissimum.

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1. Herbertus Turrium, *De Miraculis*, III, 30. Ed. Chiflet, pp. 378-379 (*cf.* Petrus Venerabilis, *De Miraculis*, I, I., Migne, CLXXXIX, 851-853).
2. Cæsarius, ix, 8. Ed. Strange, II, 172-173.
3. Etienne de Bourbon, Septem Dona. Ed. Leroy de la Marche, *Anecdotes Historiques*, 1877, pp. 266, 267, and 328.
4. Giraldus Cambrensis, *Gemma Ecclesiastica*, I, II. Ed. Brewer, II, 42-43.
5. Herbert, *Catalogus of Romances*, III (1910), 23, 388, 448, 517, 647.
6. *An Alphabet of Tales*, No. 695. Ed. Banks, II (1905), 465 (from Cæsarius, 2 supra). Cf. Deecke: *Lubische Geschichten und Sagen*, 5th Ed., p. 280.
7. *Blaetter fur Pommersche Volkskunde*, IX (1901), 3. (Host buried in a garden to improve the crop—1482, A. D.). *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft fur Schleswig-Holsteinische Geschicte*, XLV (1915), 199.

A Descent Into the Maelström

By EDGAR ALLAN POE

The ways of God in Nature, as in Providence, are not as *our* ways; nor are the models that we frame in any way commensurate to the vastness, profundity, and unsearchableness of His works, *which have a depth in them greater than the well of Democritus.—Joseph Glanville.*

WE HAD now reached the summit of the loftiest crag. For some minutes the old man seemed too much exhausted to speak.

"Not long ago," said he at length, "and I could have guided you on this route as well as the youngest of my sons; but, about three years past, there happened to me an event such as never happened before to mortal man—or at least such as no man ever survived to tell of—and the six hours of deadly terror which I then endured have broken me up body and soul. You suppose me a *very* old man—but I am not. It took less than a single day to change these hairs from a jetty black to white, to weaken my limbs, and to unstring my nerves, so that I tremble at the least exertion, and am frightened at a shadow. Do you know I can scarcely look over this little cliff without getting giddy?"

The "little cliff," upon whose edge he had so carelessly thrown himself down to rest that the weightier portion of his body hung over it, while he was only kept from falling by the tenure of his elbow on its extreme and slippery edge—this "little cliff" arose, a sheer unobstructed precipice of black shining rock, some fifteen or sixteen hundred feet from the world of crags beneath us. Nothing would have tempted me to be within a half dozen yards of its brink. In truth so deeply was I excited by the perilous position of my companion, that I fell at full length upon the ground, clung to the shrubs around me, and dared not even glance upward at the sky—while I struggled in vain to divest myself of the idea that the foundations of the mountain were in danger from the fury of the winds. It was long before I could reason myself into sufficient courage to sit up and look out into the distance.

"You must get over these fancies," said the guide, "for I have brought you here that you might have the best possible view of the scene of that event I mentioned—and to tell you the whole story with the spot just under your eye.

"We are now," he continued, in that particularizing manner which distinguished him—"we are now close upon the Norwegian coast—in the sixty-eighth degree of latitude—in the great province of Nordland—and in the dreary district of Lofoden. The mountain upon whose top we sit is

Helseggen, the Cloudy. Now raise yourself up a little higher—hold on to the grass if you feel giddy—so—and look out, beyond the belt of vapor beneath us, into the sea."

I looked dizzily, and beheld a wide expanse of ocean, whose waters wore so inky a hue as to bring at once to my mind the Nubian geographer's account of the *Mare Tenebrarum*. A panorama more deplorably desolate no human imagination can conceive. To the right and left, as far as the eye could reach, there lay outstretched, like ramparts of the world, lines of horridly black and beetling cliffs, whose character of gloom was but the more forcibly illustrated by the surf which reared high up against it its white and ghastly crest, howling and shrieking for ever. Just opposite the promontory upon whose apex we were placed, and at a distance of some five or six miles out at sea, there was visible a small, bleak-looking island; or, more properly, its position was discernible through the wilderness of surge in which it was enveloped. About two miles nearer the land arose another of smaller size, hideously craggy and barren, and encompassed at various intervals by a cluster of dark rocks.

The appearance of the ocean, in the space between the more distant island and the shore, had something very unusual about it. Although, at the time, so strong a gale was blowing landward that a brig in the remote offing lay to under a double-reefed trysail, and constantly plunged her whole hull out of sight, still there was here nothing like a regular swell, but only a short, quick, angry cross-dashing of water in every direction—as well in the teeth of the wind as otherwise. Of foam there was little except in the immediate vicinity of the rocks.

"The island in the distance," resumed the old man, "is called by the Norwegians Vurrgh. The one midway is Moskoe. That a mile to the northward is Ambaaren. Yonder are Islesen, Hotholm, Keildhelm, Suarven, and Buckholm. Further off—between Moskoe and Vurrgh—are Otterholm, Flimen, Sandflesen, and Stockholm. These are the true names of the places—but why it has been thought necessary to name them at all, is more than either you or I can understand. Do you hear anything? Do you see any change in the water?"

We had now been about ten minutes upon the top of Helseggen, to which we had ascended from the interior of Lofoden so that we had caught no glimpse of the sea until it had burst upon us from the summit. As the old man spoke, I became aware of a loud and gradually increasing sound, like the moaning of a vast herd of buffaloes upon an American prairie; and at the same moment I perceived that what seamen term the *chopping* character of the ocean beneath us was rapidly changing into a current which set to the eastward. Even while I gazed, this current acquired a monstrous velocity. Each moment added to its speed—to its headlong impetuosity. In five minutes the whole sea, as far as Vurrgh, was lashed into ungovernable fury; but it was between Moskoe and the coast that the main uproar held its sway. Here the vast bed of the waters, seamed and scarred into a thousand conflicting channels, burst suddenly into frenzied convulsion—heaving, boiling, hissing—gyrating in gigantic and innumerable vortices, and all whirling and plunging on to the eastward with a rapidity which water never elsewhere assumes, except in precipitous descents.

In a few minutes more, there came over the scene another radical alteration. The general surface grew somewhat more smooth, and the whirlpools, one by one, disappeared, while prodigious streaks of foam became apparent where none had been seen before. These streaks, at length, spreading out to a great distance, and entering

into combination, took unto themselves the gyratory motion of the subsided vortices, and seemed to form the germ of another more vast. Suddenly—very suddenly—this assumed a distinct and definite existence, in a circle of more than a mile in diameter. The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel, whose interior, as far as the eye could fathom it, was a smooth, shining, and jet-black wall of water, inclined to the horizon at an angle of some forty-five degrees, speeding dizzily round and round with a swaying and sweltering motion, and sending forth to the winds an appalling voice, half shriek, half roar, such as not even the mighty cataract of Niagara ever lifts up in its agony to Heaven.

The mountain trembled to its very base, and the rock rocked. I threw myself upon my face, and clung to the scant herbage in an excess of nervous agitation.

"This," said I at length, to the old man—"this *can* be nothing else than the great whirlpool of the Maelström."

"So it is sometimes termed," said he. "We Norwegians call it the Moskoe-ström, from the island of Moskoe in the midway."

The ordinary account of this vortex had by no means prepared me for what I saw. That of Jonas Ramus, which is perhaps the most circumstantial of any, can not impart the faintest conception either of the magnificence or of the horror of the scene—or of the wild bewildering sense of *the novel* which confounds the beholder. I am not sure from what point of view the writer in question surveyed it, nor at what time; but it could neither have been from the summit of Helseggen, nor during a storm. There are some passages of this description, nevertheless, which may be quoted for their details, although their effect is exceedingly feeble in conveying an impression of the spectacle.

"Between Lofoden and Moskoe," he says, "the depth of the water is between thirty-six and forty fathoms; but on the other side, toward Ver (Vurrgh) this depth decreases so as not to afford a convenient passage for a vessel without the risk of splitting on the rocks, which happens even in the calmest weather. When it is flood, the stream runs up the country between Lofoden and Moskoe with a boisterous rapidity; but the roar of its impetuous ebb to the sea is scarce equaled by the loudest and most dreadful cataracts; the noise being heard several leagues off, and the vortices or pits are of such an extent and depth, that if a ship comes within its attraction, it is inevitably absorbed and carried down to the bottom, and there beat to pieces against the rocks; and when the water relaxes, the fragments thereof are thrown up again. But these intervals of tranquillity are only at the turn of the ebb and flood, and in calm weather, and last but a quarter of an hour, its violence gradually returning. When the stream is most boisterous, and its fury heightened by a storm, it is dangerous to come within a Norway mile of it. Boats, yachts, and ships have been carried away by not guarding against it before they were carried within its reach. It likewise happens frequently, that whales come too near the stream, and are overpowered by its violence; and then it is impossible to describe their howlings and bellowings in their fruitless struggles to disengage themselves. A bear once, attempting to swim from Lofoden to Moskoe, was caught by the stream and borne down, while he roared terribly, so as to be heard on shore. Large stocks of firs and pine trees, after being absorbed by the current, rise again broken and torn to such a degree as if bristles grew upon them. This plainly shows the bottom to consist of craggy rocks, among which they are whirled to and fro. This stream is regulated by the flux and

reflux of the sea—it being constantly high and low water every six hours. In the year 1645, early in the morning of Sexagesima Sunday, it raged with such noise and impetuosity that the very stones of the houses on the coast fell to the ground."

In regard to the depth of the water, I could not see how this could have been ascertained at all in the immediate vicinity of the vortex. The "forty fathoms" must have reference only to portions of the channel close upon the shore either of Moskoe or Lofoden. The depth in the center of the Moskoeström must be unmeasurably greater: and no better proof of this fact is necessary than can be obtained from even the sidelong glance into the abyss of the whirl which may be had from the highest crag of Helseggen. Looking down from this pinnacle upon the howling Phlegethon below, I could not help smiling at the simplicity with which the honest Jonas Ramus records, as a matter difficult of belief, the anecdotes of the whales and the bears, for it appeared to me, in fact, a self-evident thing, that the largest ships of the line in existence, coming within the influence of that deadly attraction, could resist it as little as a feather the hurricane, and must disappear bodily and at once.

The attempts to account for the phenomenon—some of which, I remember, seemed to me sufficiently plausible in perusal—now wore a very different and unsatisfactory aspect. The idea generally received is that this, as well as three smaller vortices among the Ferroe Islands, "have no other cause than the collision of waves rising and falling, at flux and reflux, against a ridge of rocks and shelves, which confines the water so that it precipitates itself like a cataract; and thus the higher the flood rises, the deeper must the fall be, and the natural result of all is a whirlpool or vortex, the prodigious suction of which is sufficiently known by lesser experiments."—These are the words of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Kircher and others imagine that in the center of the channel of the Maelström is an abyss penetrating the globe, and issuing in some very remote part—the Gulf of Bothnia being somewhat decidedly named in one instance. This opinion, idle in itself, was the one to which, as I gazed, my imagination most readily assented; and, mentioning it to the guide, I was rather surprized to hear him say that, although it was the view almost universally entertained of the subject by the Norwegians, it nevertheless was not his own. As to the former notion he confessed his inability to comprehend it; and here I agreed with him—for, however conclusive on paper, it becomes altogether unintelligible, and even absurd, amid the thunder of the abyss.

"You have had a good look at the whirl now," said the old man, "and if you will creep round this crag, so as to get in its lee, and deaden the roar of the water, I will tell you a story that will convince you I ought to know something of the Moskoeström."

I placed myself as desired, and he proceeded.

"Myself and my two brothers once owned a schooner-rigged smack of about seventy tons burthen, with which we were in the habit of fishing among the islands beyond Moskoe, nearly to Vurrgh. In all violent eddies at sea there is good fishing, at proper opportunities, if one has only the courage to attempt it; but among the whole of the Lofoden coastmen, we three were the only ones who made a regular business of going out to the islands, as I tell you. The usual grounds are a great way lower down to the southward. There fish can be got at all hours, without much risk, and therefore these places are preferred. The choice spots over here among the rocks, however, not only yield the finest variety, but in far

greater abundance; so that we often got in a single day what the more timid of the craft could not scrape together in a week. In fact, we made it a matter of desperate speculation—the risk of life standing instead of labor, and courage answering for capital.

"We kept the smack in a cove about five miles higher up the coast than this; and it was our practise, in fine weather, to take advantage of the fifteen minutes' slack to push across the main channel of the Moskoe-ström, far above the pool, and then drop down upon anchorage somewhere near Otterholm, or Sandflesen, where the eddies are not so violent as elsewhere. Here we used to remain until nearly time for slack water again, when we weighed and made for home. We never set out upon this expedition without a steady side wind for going and coming—one that we felt sure would not fail us before our return—and we seldom made a miscalculation upon this point. Twice, during six years, we were forced to stay all night at anchor on account of a dead calm, which is a rare thing indeed just about here; and once we had to remain on the grounds nearly a week, starving to death, owing to a gale which blew up shortly after our arrival, and made the channel too boisterous to be thought of. Upon this occasion we should have been driven out to sea in spite of everything (for the whirlpools threw us round and round so violently, that, at length, we fouled our anchor and dragged it), if it had not been that we drifted into one of the innumerable cross currents—here today and gone tomorrow—which drove us under the lee of Flimen, where, by good luck, we brought up.

"I could not tell you the twentieth part of the difficulties we encountered 'on the ground'—it is a bad spot to be in, even in good weather—but we make shift always to run the gauntlet of the Moskoe-ström itself without accident; although at times my heart has been in my mouth when we happened to be a minute or so behind or before the slack. The wind sometimes was not as strong as we thought it at starting, and then we made rather less way than we could wish, while the current rendered the smack unmanageable. My eldest brother had a son eighteen years old, and I had two stout boys of my own. These would have been of great assistance at such times, in using the sweeps as well as afterward in fishing—but, somehow, although we ran the risk ourselves, we had not the heart to let the young ones get into the danger—for, after all is said and done, it *was* a horrible danger, and that is the truth.

"It is now within a few days of three years since what I am going to tell you occurred. It was on the tenth of July, 18—, a day which the people of this part of the world will never forget—for it was one in which blew the most terrible hurricane that ever came out of the heavens. And yet all the morning and indeed until late in the afternoon, there was a gentle and steady breeze from the southwest, while the sun shone brightly, so that the oldest seaman among us could not have foreseen what was to follow.

"The three of us—my two brothers and myself—had crossed over to the islands about two o'clock p. m., and soon nearly loaded the smack with fine fish, which, we all remarked, were more plenty that day than we had ever known them. It was just seven, *by my watch*, when we weighed and started for home, so as to make the worst of the Ström at slack water, which we knew would be at eight.

"We set out with a fresh wind on our starboard quarter, and for some time spanked along at a great rate, never dreaming of danger, for indeed we saw not the slightest reason to apprehend it. All at once we were taken aback by a breeze from over Helseggen. This was most unusual—something that had never happened to us

(Continued on page 128)

Can You Guess This Man's Age?

See if You Can Tell Within 25 Years; The Author Couldn't; But He Stuck With Hobart Bradstreet Until He Revealed His Method of Staying Young

I USED to pride myself on guessing people's ages. That was before I met Hobart Bradstreet, whose age I missed by a quarter-century. But before I tell you how old he really is, let me say this:

My meeting-up with Bradstreet I count the luckiest day of my life. For while we often hear how our minds and bodies are about 50% efficient—and at times feel it to be the truth—he knows *why*. Furthermore, he knows how to overcome it—in five minutes—and he showed me *how*.

This man offers no such bromides as setting-up exercises, deep-breathing, or any of those things you know at the outset you'll never do. He uses a principle that is the foundation of all chiropractic, naprapathy, mechano-therapy, and even osteopathy. Only he does not touch a hand to you; it isn't necessary.

The reader will grant Bradstreet's method of staying young worth knowing and using, when told the secret.

And here is the secret: *he keeps his spine in trim.*

Any man or woman who thinks spine motion doesn't make a difference should try it! It is easy enough. I'll tell you how. First, though, you may be curious to learn why a healthy spine puts one in an entirely new class physically. The spinal column is a series of tiny bones, between which are pads or cushions of cartilage. Nothing in the ordinary activities of us humans stretches the spine. So it "settles" day by day, until those once soft and resilient pads become thin as a safety-razor blade—and just about as hard. One's spine (the most wonderfully designed shock-absorber known) is then an unyielding column that transmits every shock straight to the base of the brain.

Do you wonder folks have backaches and headaches? That one's nerves pound toward the end of a hard day? Or that a nervous system may periodically go to pieces? For every nerve in one's body connects with the spine, which is a sort of central switchboard. When the "insulation," or cartilage, wears-down and flattens-out, the nerves are exposed, or even impinged—and there is trouble on the line.

Now, for proof that sublaxation of the spine causes most of the ills and ailments which spell "age" in men or women. Flex your spine—"shake it out"—and they will disappear. You'll feel the difference in *ten minutes*. At least, I did. It's no trick to secure complete spinal laxation as Bradstreet does it. But like everything else, one must know how. No amount of violent exercise will do it; not even chopping wood. As for walking, or golfing, your spine settles down a bit firmer with each step.

Mr. Bradstreet has evolved from his 25-year experience with spinal mechanics a simple, to-the-down formula of just five movements. Neither takes more than one minute, so it means but five minutes a day. But those movements! I never experienced such compound exhilaration before. I was a good subject for the test, for I went into it with a dull headache. At the end of the second movement I thought I could actually feel my blood circulating. The third movement in this remarkable SPINE-MOTION series brought an amazing feeling of exhilaration. One motion seemed to open and shut my backbone like a jack-knife.

I asked about constipation. He gave me another motion—a peculiar, writhing and twisting movement—and fifteen minutes later came a complete evacuation!

Hobart Bradstreet frankly gives the full credit of his conspicuous success to these simple secrets of SPINE-MOTION. He has traveled about for years, conditioning those whose means permitted a specialist at their beck and call. I met him at the Roycroft Inn, at East Aurora. But Bradstreet, young as he looks and feels, thinks he has chased around the country long enough. He has been prevailed upon to put his SPINE-MOTION method in form that makes it now generally available.

HOBART BRADSTREET, THE MAN WHO DEFIES AGE

I know what these remarkable mechanics of the spine have done for me. I have checked up at least twenty-five other cases. With all sincerity I believe nothing in the whole realm of medicine or specialism can quicker remake, rejuvenate and restore one. I wish you could see Bradstreet himself. He is arrogantly healthy; he doesn't seem to have any nerves. Yet he puffs incessantly at a black cigar that would floor some men, drinks two cups of coffee at every meal, and I don't believe he averages seven hours sleep. It shows what a sound nerve-mechanism will do. He says a man's power can and should be unabated up to the age of 60, in every sense, and I have had some astonishing testimony on that score.

Would you like to try this remarkable method of "coming back?" Or, if young, and apparently normal in your action and feelings, do you want to see your energies just about doubled? It is easy. No "apparatus" is required. Just Bradstreet's few, simple instructions, made doubly clear by his photographic poses of the five positions. Results come amazingly quick. In less than a week you should have new health, new appetite, new desires, and new capacities; you'll feel years lifted off mind and body. This man's method can be tested without risk. If you feel enormously benefited, everything is yours to keep and you have paid for it all the enormous sum of $3.00! Knowing something of the fees this man has been accustomed to receiving, I hope his unming $3.00 to the general public will have full appreciation.

The $3.00 which pays for everything is not sent in advance nor do you make any payment or deposit on delivery. Requests will be answered in turn. Try how it feels to have a full-length spine, and you'll henceforth pity men and women whose nerves are in a vise!

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Address _____

(Continued from page 126)

before—and I began to feel a little uneasy, without exactly knowing why. We put the boat on the wind, but could make no headway at all for the eddies, and I was upon the point of proposing to return to the anchorage, when, looking astern, we saw the whole horizon covered with a singular copper-colored cloud that rose with the most amazing velocity.

"In the meantime the breeze that had headed us off fell away and we were dead becalmed, drifting about in every direction. This state of things, however, did not last long enough to give us time to think about it. In less than a minute the storm was upon us—in less than two the sky was entirely overcast—and what with this and the driving spray, it became suddenly so dark that we could not see each other in the smack.

"Such a hurricane as then blew it is folly to attempt describing. The oldest seaman in Norway never experienced anything like it. We had let our sails go by the run before it cleverly took us; but, at the first puff, both our masts went by the board as if they had been sawed off—the mainmast taking with it my youngest brother, who had lashed himself to it for safety.

"Our boat was the lightest feather of a thing that ever sat upon water. It had a complete flush deck, with only a small hatch near the bow, and this hatch it had always been our custom to batten down when about to cross the Strŏm, by way of precaution against the chopping seas. But for this circumstance we should have foundered at once—for we lay entirely buried for some moments. How my elder brother escaped destruction I can not say, for I never had an opportunity of ascertaining. For my part, as soon as I had let the foresail run, I threw myself flat on deck, with my feet against the narrow gunwale of the bow, and with my hands grasping a ring-bolt near the foot of the foremast. It was mere instinct that prompted me to do this—which was undoubtedly the very best thing I could have done—for I was too much flurried to think.

"For some moments we were completely deluged, as I say, and all this time I held my breath, and clung to the bolt. When I could stand it no longer I raised myself upon my knees, still keeping hold with my hands, and thus got my head clear. Presently our little boat gave herself a shake, just as a dog does in coming out of the water, and thus rid herself, in some measure, of the seas. I was now trying to get the better of the stupor that had come over me, and to collect my senses so as to see what was to be done, when I felt somebody grasp my arm. It was my elder brother, and my heart leaped for joy, for I had made sure that he was overboard—but the next moment all this joy was turned into horror—for he put his mouth close to my ear, and screamed out the word *'Moskoeström!'*

"No one will ever know what my feelings were at that moment. I shook from head to foot as if I had had the most violent fit of the ague. I knew what he meant by that one word well enough—I knew what he wished to make me understand. With the wind that now drove us on, we were bound for the whirl of the Ström, and nothing could save us!

"You perceive that in crossing the Ström *channel*, we always went a long way up above the whirl, even in the calmest weather, and then had to wait and watch carefully for the slack—but now we were driving right upon the pool itself, and in such a hurricane as this! 'To be sure,' I thought, 'we shall get there just about the slack—there is some little hope in that'—but in the next moment I cursed myself for being so great a fool as to dream of hope at all. I knew very well that we were doomed, had we been ten times a ninety-gun ship.

"By this time the first fury of the tempest had spent itself, or perhaps we did not feel it so much, as we scudded before it, but at all events the seas, which at first had been kept down by the wind, and lay flat and frothing, now got up into absolute mountains. A singular change, too, had come over the heavens. Around in every direction it was still as black as pitch, but nearly overhead there burst out, all at once, a circular rift of clear sky—as clear as I ever saw—and of a deep bright blue—and through it there blazed forth the full moon with a luster that I never before knew her to wear. She lit up everything about us with the greatest distinctness—but, oh God, what a scene it was to light up!

"I now made one or two attempts to speak to my brother—but in some manner which I could not understand, the din had so increased that I could not make him hear a single word, although I screamed at the top of my voice in his ear. Presently he shook his head, looking as pale as death, and held up one of his fingers, as if to say *'listen!'*

"At first I could not make out what he meant—but soon a hideous thought flashed upon me. I dragged my watch from its fob. It was not going. I glanced at its face by the moonlight, and then burst in tears as I flung it far away into the ocean. *It had run down at seven o'clock! We were behind the time of the slack, and the whirl of the Ström was in full fury!*

"When a boat is well built, properly trimmed, and not deep laden, the waves in a strong gale, when she is going large, seem always to slip from beneath her—which appears strange to a landsman—and this is what is called *riding*, in sea phrase.

"Well, so far we had ridden the swells very cleverly; but presently a gigantic sea happened to take us right under the counter, and bore us with it as it rose—up—up—as if into the sky.

NUMEROUS legends almost as old as the human race represent that the earth once had two moons. Have you ever heard of the Sect of Two Moons? They were the sorcerers of China and were the greatest scientists this world had ever produced. Talk of modern progress—our arts and sciences, our discoveries and inventions are child's play beside the accomplishments of this race of Chinese devils. Shut away in that remote interior—in a valley so little heard of that it is almost mythical—beyond trackless deserts and the loftiest mountains on the globe—this terrible sect of sorcerers has been growing in power for thousands of years, storing up secret energy that some day should inundate the world with horrors such as never had been known.

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I would not have believed that any wave could rise so high. And then down we came with a sweep, a slide, and a plunge that made me feel sick and dizzy, as if I was falling from some lofty mountain-top in a dream. But while we were up I had thrown a quick glance around—and that one glance was all-sufficient. I saw our exact position in an instant. The Moskoe-ström whirlpool was about a quarter of a mile dead ahead—but no more like the everyday Moskoe-ström than the whirl, as you now see it, is like a mill-race. If I had not known where we were, and what we had to expect, I should not have recognized the place at all. As it was, I involuntarily closed my eyes in horror. The lids clenched themselves together as if in a spasm.

"It could not have been more than two minutes afterwards until we suddenly felt the waves subside, and were enveloped in foam. The boat made a sharp half-turn to larboard, and then shot off in its new direction like a thunderbolt. At the same moment the roaring noise of the water was completely drowned in a kind of shrill shriek—such a sound as you might imagine given out by the water-pipes of many thousand steam-vessels letting off their steam all together. We were now in the belt of surf that always surrounds the whirl; and I thought, of course, that another moment would plunge us into the abyss, down which we could only see indistinctly on account of the amazing velocity with which we were borne along. The boat did not seem to sink into the water at all, but to skim like an air-bubble upon the surface of the surge. Her starboard side was next the whirl, and on the larboard arose the world of ocean we had left. It stood like a huge writhing wall between us and the horizon.

"It may appear strange, but now, when we were in the very jaws of the gulf, I felt more composed than when we were only approaching it. Having made up my mind to hope no more, I got rid of a great deal of that terror which unmanned me at first. I supposed it was despair that strung my nerves.

"It may look like boasting—but what I tell you is truth—I began to reflect how magnificent a thing it was to die in such a manner, and how foolish it was in me to think of so paltry a consideration as my own individual life, in view of so wonderful a manifestation of God's power. I do believe that I blushed with shame when this idea crossed my mind. After a little while I became possessed with the keenest curiosity about the whirl itself. I positively felt a *wish* to explore its depths, even at the sacrifice I was going to make; and my principal grief was that I should never be able to tell my old companions on shore about the mysteries I should see. These, no doubt, were singular fancies to occupy a man's mind in such extremity—and I have often thought since, that the revolutions of the boat around the pool might have rendered me a little light-headed.

"There was another circumstance which tended to restore my self-possession; and this was the cessation of the wind, which could not reach us in our present situation—for, as you saw for yourself, the belt of the surf is considerably lower than the general bed of the ocean, and this latter now towered above us, a high, black mountainous ridge. If you have never been at sea in a heavy gale, you can form no idea of the confusion of mind occasioned by the wind and spray together. They blind, deafen, and strangle you, and take away all power of action or reflection. But we were now, in a great measure, rid of these annoyances—just as death-condemned felons in prison are allowed petty indulgences, forbidden them while their doom is yet uncertain.

"How often we made the circuit of the belt it is impossible to say. We careered round and round for perhaps an hour, flying rather than floating, getting gradually more and more into the middle of the surge, and then nearer and nearer to its horrible inner edge. All this time I had never let go of the ring-bolt. My brother was at the stern, holding on to a small empty water-cask which had been securely lashed under the coop of the counter, and was the only thing on deck that had not been swept overboard when the gale first took us. As we approached the brink of the pit he let go his hold upon this, and made for the ring, from which, in the agony of his terror, he endeavored to force my hands, as it was not large enough to afford us both a secure grasp. I never felt deeper grief than when I saw him attempt this act—although I knew he was a madman when he did it—a raving maniac through sheer fright. I did not care, however, to contest the point with him. I knew it could make no difference whether either of us held on at all; so I let him have the bolt, and went astern to the cask. This there was no great difficulty in doing; for the smack flew round steadily enough, and upon an even keel—only swaying to and fro with the immense sweeps and swelters of the whirl. Scarcely had I secured myself in my new position, when we gave a wild lurch to starboard, and rushed headlong into the abyss. I muttered a hurried prayer to God, and thought all was over.

"As I felt the sickening sweep of the descent, I had instinctively tightened my hold upon the barrel, and closed my eyes. For some seconds I dared not open them—while I expected instant destruction, and wondered that I was not already in my death-struggles with the water. But moment after moment elapsed. I still lived. The sense of falling had ceased; and the motion of the vessel seemed

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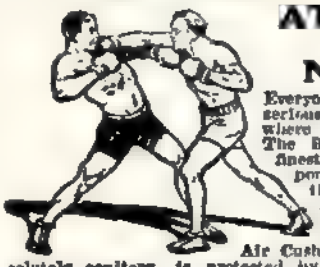

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much as it had been before, while in the belt of foam, with the exception that she now lay more along. I took courage and looked once again upon the scene.

"Never shall I forget the sensation of awe, horror, and admiration with which I gazed about me. The boat appeared to be hanging, as if by magic, midway down, upon the interior surface of a funnel vast in circumference, prodigious in depth, and whose perfectly smooth sides might have been mistaken for ebony, but for the bewildering rapidity with which they spun around, and for the gleaming and ghastly radiance they shot forth, as the rays of the full moon, from that circular rift amid the clouds which I have already described, streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the immost recesses of the abyss.

"At first I was too much confused to observe anything accurately. The general burst of terrific grandeur was all that I beheld. When I recovered myself a little, however, my gaze fell instinctively downward. In this direction I was able to obtain an unobstructed view, from the manner in which the smack hung on the inclined surface of the pool. She was quite upon an even keel—that is to say, her deck lay in a plane parallel with that of the water—but this latter sloped at an angle of more than forty-five degrees, so that we seemed to be lying upon our beam-ends. I could not help observing, nevertheless, that I had scarcely more difficulty in maintaining my hold and footing in this situation, than if we had been upon a dead level; and this, I suppose, was owing to the speed at which we revolved.

"The rays of the moon seemed to search the very bottom of the profound gulf; but still I could make out nothing distinctly on account of a thick mist in which everything there was enveloped, and over which there hung a magnificent rainbow, like that narrow and tottering bridge which Mussulmans say is the only pathway between Time and Eternity. This mist, or spray, was no doubt occasioned by the clashing of the great walls of the funnel, as they all met together at the bottom—but the yell that went up to the heavens from out of that mist I dare not attempt to describe.

"Our first slide into the abyss itself, from the belt of foam, had carried us to a great distance down the slope; but our further descent was by no means proportionate. Round and round we swept—not with any uniform movement—but in dizzying swings and jerks, that sent us sometimes only a few hundred yards—sometimes nearly the complete circuit of the whirl. Our progress downward, at each revolution, was slow, but very perceptible.

"Looking about me upon the wide waste of liquid ebony on which we were thus borne, I perceived that our boat was not the only object in the embrace of the whirl. Both above and below us were visible fragments of vessels, large masses of building-timber and trunks of trees, with many smaller articles, such as pieces of house furniture, broken boxes, barrels and staves. I have already described the unnatural curiosity which had taken the place of my original terrors. It appeared to grow upon me as I drew nearer and nearer to my dreadful doom. I now began to watch, with a strange interest, the numerous things that floated in our company. I *must* have been delirious, for I even sought *amusement* in speculating upon the relative velocities of their several descents toward the foam below. 'This fir-tree,' I found myself at one time saying, 'will certainly be the next thing that takes the awful plunge and disappears,'—and then I was disappointed to find that the wreck of a Dutch merchant ship overtook it and went down before. At length, after

making several guesses of this nature, and being deceived in all—this fact—the fact of my invariable miscalculation—set me upon a train of reflection that made my limbs again tremble, and my heart beat heavily once more.

"It was not a new terror that thus affected me, but the dawn of a more exciting *hope*. This hope arose partly from memory, and partly from present observation. I called to mind the great variety of buoyant matter that strewed the coast of Lofoden, having been absorbed and then thrown forth by the Moskoe-ström. By far the greater number of the articles were shattered in the most extraordinary way—so chafed and roughened as to have the appearance of being stuck full of splinters—but then I distinctly recollected that there were *some* of them which were not disfigured at all. Now I could not account for this difference except by supposing that the roughened fragments were the only ones which had been *completely absorbed*—that the others had entered the whirl at so late a period of the tide, or, from some reason, had descended so slowly after entering, that they did not reach the bottom before the turn of the flood came, or the ebb, as the case might be. I conceived it possible, in either instance, that they might thus be whirled up again to the level of the ocean, without undergoing the fate of those which had been drawn in more early or absorbed more rapidly. I made, also, three important observations. The first was, that as a general rule, the larger the bodies were, the more rapid their descent—the second, that, between two masses of equal extent, the one spherical, and the other *of any other shape*, the superiority in speed of descent was with the sphere—the third, that, between two masses of equal size, the one cylindrical and the other of any other shape, the cylinder was absorbed the more slowly. Since my escape, I have had several conversations on this subject with an old schoolmaster of the

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district; and it was from him that I learned the use of the words 'cylinder' and 'sphere.' He explained to me—although I have forgotten the explanation—how what I observed was, in fact, the natural consequence of the forms of the floating fragments—and showed me how it happened that a cylinder, swimming in a vortex, offered more resistance to its suction, and was drawn in with greater difficulty than an equally bulky body, of any form whatever.*

"There was one startling circumstance which went a great way in enforcing these observations, and rendering me anxious to turn them to account, and this was that, at every revolution, we passed something like a barrel, or else the yard or the mast of a vessel, while many of these things, which had been on our level when I first opened my eyes upon the wonders of the whirlpool, were now high up above us, and seemed to have moved but little from their original station.

"I no longer hesitated what to do. I resolved to lash myself securely to the water-cask upon which I now held, to cut it loose from the counter, and to throw myself with it into the water. I attracted my brother's attention by signs, pointed to the floating barrels that came near us, and did everything in my power to make him understand what I was about to do. I thought at length that he comprehended my design—but, whether this was the case or not, he shook his head despairingly, and refused to move from his station by the ring-bolt. It was impossible to reach him; the emergency admitted of no delay; and so, with a bitter struggle, I resigned him to his fate, fastened myself to the cask by means of the lashings which secured it to the counter, and precipitated myself with it into the sea, without another moment's hesitation.

*See Archimedes, *"De Incidentibus in Fluida"* —lib. 2.

"THE result was precisely what I had hoped it might be. As it is myself who now tell you this tale—as you see that I *did* escape—and as you are already in possession of the mode in which this escape was effected, and must therefore anticipate all that I have further to say—I will bring my story quickly to conclusion. It might have been an hour, or thereabouts, after my quitting the smack, when, having descended to a vast distance beneath me, it made three or four wild gyrations in rapid succession, and, bearing my loved brother with it, plunged headlong, at once and forever, into the chaos of foam below. The barrel to which I was attached sunk very little farther than half the distance between the bottom of the gulf and the spot at which I leaped overboard before a great change took place in the character of the whirlpool. The slope of the sides of the vast funnel became momentarily less and less steep. The gyrations of the whirl grew, gradually, less and less violent. By degrees, the froth and the rainbow disappeared, and the bottom of the gulf seemed slowly to uprise. The sky was clear, the winds had gone down, and the full moon was setting radiantly in the west, when I found myself on the surface of the ocean, in full view of the shores of Lofoden, and above the spot where the pool of the Moskoe-ström *had been*. It was the hour of the slack—but the sea still heaved in mountainous waves from the effects of the hurricane. I was borne violently into the channel of the Ström, and in a few minutes was hurried down the coast into the 'grounds' of the fishermen. A boat picked me up—exhausted from fatigue—and (now that the danger was removed) speechless from the memory of its horror. Those who drew me on board were my old mates and daily companions—but they knew me no more than they would have known a traveler from the spirit-land. My hair, which had been raven black the day before,

was as white as you see it now. They say too that the whole expression of my countenance had changed. I told them my story—they did not believe it. I now tell it to *you*—and I can scarcely expect you to put more faith in it than did the merry fishermen of Lofoden."

Ougabalys

By
CLARK ASHTON SMITH

In billow-lost Poseidonis,
I was the god Ougabalys:
  My three horns were of similor
Above my double diadem,
My one eye was a moon-wan gem
  Found in a monstrous meteor.

Incredible far peoples came,
Called by the thunders of my fame,
  And fleetly passed my terraced throne,
Where titan pards and lions stood,
As pours a never-lapsing flood
  Before the wind of winter blown.

Before me, many a chorister
Made offering of alien myrrh,
  And copper-bearded sailors brought,
From isles of ever-foaming seas,
Enormous lumps of ambergris
  And corals intricately wrought.

Below my glooming architraves,
One brown eternal file of slaves
  Came in from mines of chalcedon,
And camels from the long plateaux
Laid down their sard and peridoz,
  Their incense and their cinnamon.

But now, within my sunken walls,
The slow blind ocean-serpent crawls,
  And sea-worms are my ministers;
And wondering fishes pass me now,
Or press before mine eyeless brow
  As once the thronging worshipers.

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The Man Who Mastered . . . . Time

By Ray Cummings

* * * * *

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The PHANTOM in the RAINBOW

By Sloane La Master

For half a minute that wail rent the night—its undulating sound breaking into horror-laden notes, abounding in inhuman torment.

Who or what is this weird song that haunts the King of Wall Street? The answer is in "The Phantom in the Rainbow."

* * * * *

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The Curse of the House of Phipps

(Continued from page 29)

wise at the same time. With a scraping, rasping sound the slab came away from its anchorage, tilted obliquely a moment, then rolled back.

Before us lay a stone-sided crypt some two and a half feet deep by four feet wide, more than six feet long, floored with a second slab of slate like that we had just wrenched loose. What I expected to see inside I do not know. Certainly, I was unprepared for the sight which met my eyes.

Calm as though she had lain down to sleep an hour before, lay a girl, young, slim, delicate. From the tip of her head to the soles of her heavy brogans with their wide brass buckles she was as carefully arrayed as though clad to attend a meeting of the townsfolk of old Woolwich. True, her wrists were bound with a twist of knotted rawhide, but the fingers of her hands lay placidly together as though folded in prayer, and on her fresh, girlish features was a look of peace and calm such as few who die "naturally" in their beds are privileged to wear. Too, the preservation of her body was well-nigh perfect; time and death alike appeared to have passed her by, or paused reluctant in their work of destruction at sight of her frail beauty.

But what amazed me more than anything was the startling resemblance the dead girl bore to Marguerite DuPont of Twentieth Century Woolwich, Marguerite DuPont who even now stepped timidly forward to gaze upon the features which had lain beneath the stone of sacrifice for upward of two hundred years.

"A-a-ah!" de Grandin let his breath out slowly between his teeth. "She died horribly, this poor one, but peace was hers at last, it seems. Now, Friend *Pasteur*, the time had come for you to——"

Something—a wisp of vapor generated by the burning of the house and confined in a cranny of the hearth-grave, perhaps—wafted upward from the martyred French girl's tomb, floated lightly a moment in the chill midwinter air, and seemed to settle like a cloud upon the shoulders of young Edwin Phipps. Next instant he had fallen to the pavement, clawing at his neck with impotent hands, making uncouth, gurgling noises in his throat. Already, at the corners of his lips, appeared twin tiny stains of blood, as though a vessel in his throat had ruptured.

"No—*no;* you shall not have him! He's mine; *mine,* I tell you!" The cry seemed wrung from Marguerite DuPont, who, fallen to her knees beside the struggling man, fought frantically to drive the hovering vapor off, beating at it as if it were a swarm of summer gnats.

"To prayers, Friend Priest! *Pour l'amour d'un canard,* proceed quickly!" de Grandin cried. "You, too, *mes braves!* Attend your duties!" He waved imperatively at the undertaker and his assistants.

"Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord; for in Thy sight shall no man be justified, unless through Thee he find pardon——" the priest intoned.

Quickly, but gently, the undertaker's men lifted the calm cold body from beneath the hearthstone, placed it with practised hands in the waiting casket, and closed the lid.

Astonishingly, like steam dissolving in the cold morning air, the baleful white cloud surrounding young Phipps's head began to vanish. In a

moment it had disappeared and he lay panting, his head pillowed in the crook of Marguerite's uninjured arm, her little handkerchief wiping away the tiny gouts of blood from his lips.

Father Rizzio followed the casket. "Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her——" he murmured.

The little Frenchman began to laugh. Sharply his chuckle sounded in contrast to the devotional chant of the clergyman who now stood beside the hearse in which the mortician and his men disposed the casket preparatory to the journey to the graveyard.

"*Barbe d'un bouc,* my friends, it is too droll!" he cried, pausing to wipe his eyes, then giving himself up once more to unbridled merriment. "Me, I know all; I have made much inquiry of late, yet never did I foresee that which has transpired. Jules de Grandin, the very good jest is on you!" And once again he laughed until I thought his sides would surely break.

"Observe them, Friend Trowbridge," he ordered, nodding delightedly to Edwin Phipps and Marguerite. "Is it not an excellent-good joke?"

I looked at him in wonder. Young Phipps was recovering quickly under the girl's ministrations, and as he opened his eyes and murmured something she bent quickly and kissed him on the mouth.

"What's funny about that?" I queried almost angrily.

"Forgive my unseemly merriment," he begged as we set out for the cemetery to witness the interment of poor Marguerite DuPont's body, "but as I said before, I knew much which is withheld from you, and might easily have seen that which has happened had I not been one great muttonhead. Attend me, if you please:

"You wonder that Mademoiselle Marguerite resembles her whom we have but a moment ago raised from her unconsecrated grave? *Pardieu,*

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'twould be strange if it were otherwise. The one is great-great-granddaughter to the other, no less! Consider: When first the young *Monsieur* advised us of this so mysterious fate which overtook his ancestors, I was greatly interested. If, as old Monsieur Obediah recounts in his diary, the poor one, Marguerite DuPont, lay buried beneath the wicked hearthstone of that evil house, I greatly favored the idea that the memory of an ancient grudge—resentment which held fast like death—was focused there, for where the misused body lay, I thought, there, in all probability, would be found the well-spring of the malediction which has pursued the Phippses. Therefore, I told me, we must go there, untomb the poor, murdered body of the unfortunate woman, and give it Christian burial. A fervent Catholic she had lived; such, presumably, she had died, though there was no priest to shrive her soul or commit her body to a restful grave. These omissions, they must be remedied, I told me, and then, perhaps, she should have peace, and the bane of her old curse might be loosened.

"Very well, to this so execrable old house we did repair, and on that very night comes Mademoiselle Marguerite the second, praying shelter from the storm and from the miscreants who had wounded her.

"Anon, comes that Monsieur Claude, intent on frightening us from out the house, but I am not deceived, and shoot him through the lungs. He dies, and in the same hour his son is born. Thus by accident or deliberate design of the malignant dead, the family curse is once more fulfilled. Yes.

"What I did not then know, however, was that the lady we have rescued was a lineal descendant of that Marguerite DuPont whose body lay almost beneath our feet at the moment. Remember how it are recorded that she bore a son to wicked old Monsieur Joshua? The son assumed his mother's name, since craven cowardice had caused his father to disown him. It is always so, when women love with greater strength than wisdom, my friends.

"At first the scandal of his birth hung on him like a dirty cloak, but those were stirring times, the freedom of a people trembled in the balance, and men were measured more by deeds than by paternity. From out the crucible of war Jonathan DuPont emerged with glory, and became a leading citizen of the township which had cast verbal stones—if nothing worse—upon his poor, dead mother. His progeny retained his virtues, and the family which he founded now ranks with that from which he sprang. DuPont is now an honored name in Woolwich.

"This much I learned by much discreet inquiry; what I could not know, because my eyes were everywhere but where they should have been, was that the hatred of the ancestors offered no bar to the love of their descendants. *Parbleu*, that Monsieur Cupid, he shoots his arrows where he pleases, and none may say him nay!

"Today, when the last gasp of dying hatred would have overwhelmed Friend Edwin, Mademoiselle Marguerite does battle with her ancestress for the life of him she loves, and—*grâce à Dieu*—it did appear that love is lord of hate, and the victory was hers. I am very glad."

HALF an hour ago de Grandin and I returned from the pretty home Edwin and Marguerite Phipps have built in Harrisonville. This afternoon their first-born son, Edwin de Grandin Phipps, was christened with all the ceremony ordained by the Book of Common Prayer. There was much to eat, and more to drink attendant on the function, and I regret to state that my little friend returned in a condition far removed from that ap-

proved by the ladies of the W. C. T. U.

Seated on his bed, one patent leather shoe removed, he gazed with philosophical concentration at the mauve-silk sock thus exposed. "Friend Trowbridge," he declared at length, "I wish Monsieur and Madame Phipps as many progeny as the Grand Turk boasts. I hope they are all christened in due and ancient form; I sincerely hope they have as much liquid refreshment at future christenings as at this afternoon's so delightful service." A moment he paused, struggling manfully with the other shoe; then, as the footgear came away in response to a tremendous tug, he added:

"And may Jules de Grandin be there to drink it!"

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The Bird-People

(Continued from page 48)

who might have been one of our own people so far as his physical appearance went, except that he wore a garment which greatly resembled the skin of a lion, across one shoulder, and girded around his waist. Both men were armed with the double funnel-shaped contrivances and lethal tubes.

It was not until both men had dashed to the center of the arena and stood facing each other at a distance of about fifty feet that I realized that they were to be opponents in a duel to the death.

"Crest of my grandfather!" exclaimed Katodar Se, who was perched on my right, "if it be not the mechanic who so nearly caused our death!"

"But who is the other?" I asked. "The one with the skin about him?"

"A captured warrior of Gulva-

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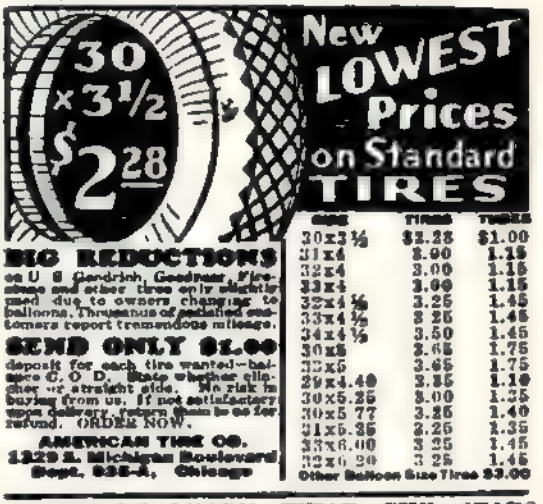
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sora," he replied. "If he succeeds in besting ten of our felons who have been condemned to the games, he will be permitted to live in peace among us."

"But not given his freedom?"

"Perhaps, when his country ceases to war with ours."

At the sound of a gong, the two combatants suddenly went into action. Because of my previous observation of the work of these lethal tubes, I expected the contest to be over in an instant. But I was mistaken. I had never seen the funnel-like devices used before. Now they were brought into play, being held in the left hand so that the funnel on one end was in front of the fighter while that on the other projected back from beneath the left arm. Both fighters crouched low behind their funnels, manipulating their deadly tubes with no apparent effect on each other, and hopping or darting this way and that as if sparring for openings.

Suddenly the bird-man sprang toward his opponent, apparently bent on dispatching him at close quarters, but he had made a fatal mistake of some sort, for he disappeared in mid-air.

While the white victor awaited his next opponent, I plied Katodar Se with questions regarding the weapons, and he explained their use.

"All matter," he said, "is but a mode of motion. Dense matter is a group of slow motions, while lighter matter is an agglomerate of swifter motions. The tubes are nothing more than matter energizers which, when properly pointed and focused, increase the atomic and proton-electronic motion of matter so rapidly that its density is reduced to nothing at all, or at least to nothing of which we are able to take cognizance, which amounts to the same thing. The defensive instruments are built to attract and capture the rays from the tubes, which, being thus intercepted, form a flux through them, similar to a magnetic flux through a bar of iron. During the process, however, they are slowed down by resistance until, before emerging at the other end, they are rendered quite harmless."

The white warrior fell before his next opponent, and others were brought on the field to duel with the same type of weapons. It appeared, however, that these duels were merely preliminaries to whet the appetites of the people for the more bloody and primitive battles that followed. Men fought with clubs, stones, axes, swords, and bows and arrows quite similar to those used in Europe in early days. The lethal tubes were used, however, to clear the arena of corpses and gore at the end of each fight by the simple process of dissolving them to nothingness.

Then horrible, grotesque, man-killing creatures were brought on the scene. The first, a huge feathered snake at least forty feet in length, crawled into the arena amid cries of delight from the onlookers. A white man of the enemy nation of Gulvasora, although armed with a sword and a brave fighter, was seized and swallowed after a short skirmish. After swallowing a second white swordsman the snake grew sluggish, and was dragged away with a large cable attached behind its jaws.

Numerous other queer creatures, most of them apparently half bird, half reptile, slew or were slain in their turn. Then the booming of the gong silenced the crowd, and a crier stood forth to announce the final event.

"People of Axtosora," he said, "our mighty ruler has prepared a most pleasant surprize for you. Today you have seen a hundred of our hated enemies do battle in the arena. Our raiding expeditions have been victorious and a thousand more lie in our prisons to pleasure you on other fête days. But this is not all. You shall now see how the mightiest scientist in Alsitar takes vengeance on Ten-

san De, ruler of the hated Gulvasorians."

At the conclusion of this announcement the gongs boomed once more. Then a dozen men entered the arena, bearing on their shoulders a closed litter or palanquin. While the population twittered with curiosity they marched to the center of the arena and lowered the litter to the ground. One of the bearers then opened a door in the side, reached within, and dragged out a young woman. He pulled her roughly forward by the wrist, but she jerked from his grasp and stood with chin erect, proud defiance mingled with disdain in the look which she returned to the grinning Vangar De. At sight of her a medley of deafening cries came from the onlookers.

One of the litter-bearers cast a sword at her feet, but she paid no attention to it. Then the twelve bird-men took up the palanquin and withdrew from the arena.

The girl—she could not have been more than eighteen — was the most beautiful I have ever beheld in that world or this. Her golden ringlets were circled by a chain of white metal, studded with jewels, and in which a great gleaming emerald glittered above the center of her forehead. A black and yellow garment, apparently made from the skins of leopards, covered her slim body from breasts to thighs, leaving shoulders, arms and legs bare. On her feet were sandals bound with light thongs.

"Who is she?" I asked, turning to my instructor.

"She is Rosan, daughter of Tensan De of Gulvasora," replied Katodar Se. "Great will be the vengeance of Vangar De, and great the sorrowing of his enemies."

While he was speaking there came a murmur from the other end of the stadium, and looking, I saw a huge bird stalk into the arena. It was three times as tall as any ostrich I have ever seen, and of a much more stocky

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build. Its wings and body were covered with feathers, mottled black and brown, but its great blue scrawny neck and head were naked and wrinkled like those of a vulture. The huge, curved beak, at least two feet in length, was also vulture-like in appearance, and the scaly legs terminated in feet armed with formidable-looking talons.

"The man-eating gor!" exclaimed Katodar Se. "She will never escape alive."

THE hideous creature had only stalked forward a few steps when it espied its victim in the center of the arena. Then it spread its wings outward, extended its ugly head, and ran straight for the girl. Scarcely realizing what I did, I leaped over the railing and alighted sprawling on the sand twenty feet below. Then I whipped out both forty-fives and sprinted forward, calling to the girl in the language I had just been at such pains to learn.

The bird, however, was too swift for me—swifter, I am convinced, than anything that ever ran upon our earth. Before it reached the girl she stooped and picked up the sword, then crouched, awaiting the attack. The thing had evidently been pricked with swords before, as it showed considerable wariness, circling swiftly around the girl. Suddenly it lunged out with its huge curved beak, seized the blade of the weapon, and tore it from her grasp. I was then within range, but dared not fire for fear of hitting the girl, who was between me and her attacker.

Again I called to her, and this time she heard me, for she immediately turned and ran in my direction. For a moment the bird shook the sword, apparently trying to crunch it in its beak. Then the blade snapped, and the horrid monster, dropping the pieces, leaped forward once more in pursuit of its victim.

I fired as the exhausted girl fell at my feet, but with no perceptible effect on her assailant. Then, with that huge body as a target, I emptied both weapons. To my horror, the thing still advanced!

It was nearly upon us when it faltered, its scaly legs sagging as if under a tremendous weight. There was not time to reload, so I caught up the exhausted girl just as that ugly, gaping beak reached out to seize her, and ran.

I must have covered fully a hundred yards before I realized that pursuit had ceased. Then, upon looking around, I saw the hideous man-eater fluttering and squawking in an aimless circle on the sand.

There was a terrific din in the stadium around us. Believing it was caused by my own actions, I gently lowered the girl to the sand and reloaded my weapons. A shadow, darting across the sand in front of me, attracted my gaze to the heavens and disabused my mind. I saw that which had probably saved both of us from annihilation by the lethal tubes—for the sky was actually swarming with spinning spheres, similar in color and outline to the one which had drawn us to this strange land, but only half as large. Many of them alighted in the arena, and belched forth an army of white warriors, armed with lethal tubes and wave-shields. The panic-stricken yellow people fled this way and that like frightened birds seeking cover, while the tubes of the white warriors took deadly toll. The few bird soldiers in the stadium were quickly disposed of, and it began to look like a thorough victory for the white men, when suddenly the huge globe which had brought us to Alsitar came whirling into view, followed by a flock of smaller globes filled with the yellow defenders. Evidently Vangar De had survived the attack and managed to reach his globe.

Rotating with such rapidity that its portholes were invisible, the big globe descended toward the arena. Suddenly a red ray shot out from it to one of the smaller globes of the white attackers. It arose, and was hurled out into space. Then another and another, caught by the whirling red ray, hurtled out of the arena in long parabolas and disappeared into the blue sky above us.

The girl at my feet stirred uneasily, and I helped her to rise.

"If my father would only come," she cried, "victory might yet be ours. But the great globe of Vangar De is far too powerful for our ordinary war-globes."

One by one, the globes of the Gulvasorians were hurled into outer space until only two remained in the arena. Then, with unexpected suddenness, a huge globe, fully as large as that of Vangar De, appeared.

"He comes! He comes!" cried the girl. "Now will the bird-men learn the might of Tensan De."

Spinning with a velocity that equaled, if it did not excel that of the first globe, the second whirled toward it. They did not collide as I expected, but suddenly began revolving around a common center with such speed that they formed a great blurred ring in the sky above our heads, united by two red rays, each of which projected from one of the globes.

Presently from this giant pinwheel there came a familiar crackling sound. A trail of scintillating sparks appeared, and two violet rays now connected the whirling globes. Vangar De, I assumed, was trying to use his violet ray as he had used it on our ship, and send his rival's globe hurtling into a different angle of vibration, but the ray of Tensan De neutralized it and was, in turn, neutralized.

The pinwheel, meanwhile, did not remain stationary in the sky, but

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darted this way and that, and whirled in every conceivable plane. Presently it dipped toward us, there in the arena.

"Run! Run for your life!"

I heard the warning cry of the girl. Simultaneously a violet light fell on me and the world in which I stood melted from my vision. I felt myself falling — then I splashed into cold, salt water. Down, down I went, for many seconds, before I had the sense to strike out. It was a long swim to the surface, where I presently emerged with nearly bursting lungs. I was in rough water and my guns and ammunition weighted me down until swimming was next to impossible.

Unclasping my two gun-belts and letting them sink, I slipped out of my raincoat and jacket, kicked off my boots, and managed to keep afloat more easily. I presently made out, far in the distance, a rocky shore-line, whence came the boom of breakers, and struck out for it, swimming steadily to conserve my strength.

How I managed to reach that shore alive and drag myself beyond the reach of the waves, I scarcely know. When full possession of my reasoning faculties came once more, I found that I had somehow been again transported to the terrestrial angle of vibration. For many months I subsisted on shell-fish and fruits, hoping for sight of a rescue ship.

Years passed. They were years of loneliness which would have driven me quite mad but for a certain memory—a vision of a lovely creature I had held in my arms for a brief instant, only to lose her forever.

Born to this world, I am no longer of it, for my heart lies back in that far or near angle of vibration called Alsitar, and although I now deem it hopeless, I long to go back—to learn once and for all if the golden-haired Rosan still lives with her learned father, Tensan De, in the land of Gulvasora.

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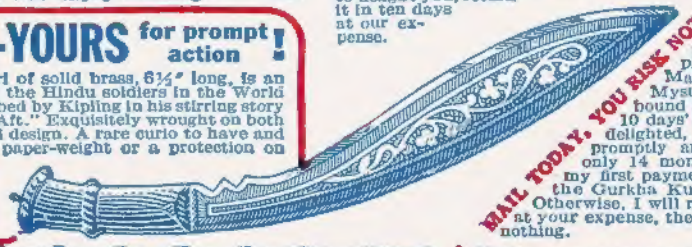

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